

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **The ‘curious gap between hope and happening’ inclusive education in Guyana’s primary schools**

Lashley, Lidon Cedrick

*Award date:*  
2021

*Awarding institution:*  
University of Roehampton

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# **The ‘Curious Gap between Hope and Happening’: Inclusive Education in Guyana’s Primary Schools**

by

**Lidon Cedrick Lashley**

**Tr. Cert., B.Ed., Pg. Dip. Acc, Pg. Cert. Ed. *Mgmt.*, M.Ed. C&I, M. A. SEN**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of PhD**

**Department of Education**

**UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON, LONDON**

**2021**

## **Acknowledgements**

I acknowledge the divine support and inspiration from Jehovah. Moreover, I wish to pause to acknowledge that without his wisdom, understanding and strength, my study would not have been completed. Jehovah's guidance provided me with the will and courage to keep on persisting and to persevere to the end.

Many stakeholders from the mainstream primary education system in Guyana and the University of Guyana continuously gave me support. I take this opportunity to formally extend sincere gratitude to all who provided guidance and/or assisted with the completion of my study.

Most importantly, I wish to express my gratitude to my Director of Studies, Professor Debbie Epstein and my supervisor, Dr Sarah O'Flynn for their combined guidance and support. It was their guidance which helped me to develop my skills as a southern poststructuralist researcher. Professor Debbie Epstein and Dr Sarah O'Flynn helped me stay on course as a researcher whenever I felt overwhelmed. They directed me to the appropriate reading and provided technical direction and support.

Additionally, I extend gratitude to Dr Michelle Semple-McBean, HOD of Foundation and Education Management, School of Education and Humanities, University of Guyana, who was incredibly supportive and continuously enquired about my academic progress as well as my general wellbeing. To the other researchers, educators, psychologists and theorists whose works were studied, alluded to and referenced, due recognition is given. Finally, to all others who were involved in one way or another but are not mentioned, your contributions are appreciated.

## **Abstract**

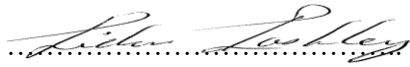
I explore the experiences of children with Special Education Needs and disabilities (SEND) placed in two mainstream primary schools within postcolonial Guyana. It is a qualitative study, which employed situational analysis as posited by Adele Clarke (2005, 2008). I embraced the social model of disability. I also used the poststructuralist lens to understand the discourse, meaning and interpretations of the experiences of children with SEND. Throughout the nine chapters in this thesis, I argue that the placement of children with SEND in the two mainstream primary schools I studied was an unpleasant, marginalising and depersonalising experience for the children. In this study, I make five significant contributions to the literature. First, I provide an understanding of the experiences of children with SEND in the two mainstream primary schools studied. Second, I provide a southern inclusive framework to guide the placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools in Guyana. Third, I give a southern inclusive checker as a tool to support the framework and guide mainstream teachers to self-monitor and regulate their practice. This could initiate more meaningful experiences for all children in an inclusive learning environment. It could also support mainstream teachers in making simple, reasonable adjustments to reduce barriers faced by children which are unique to the mainstream schooling within postcolonial Guyana. Fourth, I provide guidelines for the development of the structures, practices and values within the Guyanese education system. Finally, I offer an analysis of the northern social model of disability frameworks from a southern perspective and explain the challenges and opportunities within these frameworks if they are to be used extensively in Guyana.

## Declaration and Word Count

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Word count (exclusive of appendices and list of references):

**One hundred two thousand and eighty-one (102,081)**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lidon Cedrick Lashley", written over a dotted line.

Lidon Cedrick Lashley

2020

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# **Glossary of Key Terms**

## **Ability**

Abilities are properties of the union of person and environment that exhibit the opportunity structure of a situation and the affectivity structure of the person in taking advantage of the opportunities afforded for learning experiences, participation and socialisation. There is, thus, reciprocity, a form of dance, between the person and the situation. Therefore, changes in the demands or affordances of the situation, and the apparent abilities of the person are also changed (Artiles & Bal, 2008; Snow, 1994).

## **Inclusive Education**

This is explored in the Chapter 1.4. Inclusive education aims to accommodate all regardless of diversities, abilities, background, culture, race, gender, socioeconomic status, and impairments (Booths & Ainscow, 2002, 2011; Loreman, 2009, 2014; Levitt, 2017; Oliver, 2008, 2013; Shakespeare, 2014).

## **Normalisation**

Normalisation is the process by which conditions of everyday living are made available to all children with SEND, which are as close as possible to the regular circumstances and ways of life and society. This could be done within the mainstream education system in which the children with SEND are placed (Wolfensberger, 2011).

## **Inclusion**

Inclusion represents a whole-school concern and works to align special education with general education in a manner that most effectively and efficiently imparts quality education to all children (Grima-Farrell, Bain & McDonagh, 2011; Rief & Heimburge, 2006).

## **Integration**

The concept of integration focuses largely on the assimilation of children with SEND into mainstream schools. Integration placed little or no onus on the school to make adjustments and adaptations to meet the specific needs of children. Instead, children with SEND are expected to adapt to a system of education which is largely unchanged (Glazzard, Stokoe, Hughes, Netherwood & Neve, 2015).

## **Special Education**

Special Education is a subsystem of education planned and organised to provide learning experiences and educational and social opportunities for children with SEND who fail to benefit from regular mainstream programs (Algozzine & Maheady, 1986).

## **Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)**

SEND refers to children who require additional support beyond the normal educational learning experiences and opportunities of the traditional mainstream education system. There are several definitions for SEND with different countries having different definitions. In Guyana, SEND is defined using the UK, 2001 Code of Practice as follows:

‘Children have Special Needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. Children have a learning difficulty if they:

- (a) Have a significantly greater difficulty than the majority of children of the same age.
- (b) Have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of the kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the local education authority.
- (c) Are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above or would do so if Special Educational provision was not made for them.

Special Educational provision means educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from the educational provision made generally for children of their age in school.’ (Department for Education and Skills, 2001, p.13)

## **Disability**

‘Disability is the complex relationship between the environment, body and psyche, which serves to exclude certain people from becoming full participants in interpersonal, social, cultural, economic and political affairs’ (Marks, 1999, p. 611). It is a limitation created when there are challenges and barriers which hinder participation, socialisation and experiences of individuals with impairments. It is important to note here that Guyana has neither developed an official definition of disability nor policies, laws, frameworks and practices for inclusive education in mainstream schools (Ajodhia-Andrews, 2007; Cheong et al., 2018, 2019; Fraser 2014; Lashley, 2017).

## **Mainstream Education**

Mainstream Education refers to the education systems that provide learning experiences and educational opportunities/access for the general population of children without an identified SEND. This may occur in regular classrooms, in the lunchroom, in hallways, in particular subjects, in school assemblies, co-curricular and extracurricular activities (Biklen, 1985).

## **Learning Experiences**

Learning experiences are the combination of activities, interactions, simulations, expositions, courses, programs, or other opportunities structured and organised or unstructured and incidental. They are designed to facilitate the construction of knowledge, development of skills and values while transmitting cultures, norms and values resulting in a change in behaviour (Harden, 2007).

# **SECTION 1**

## **INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

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### **Chapter One: Introduction and Context**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

The curious gap between hope and happening (Kenway, Willis, Blackmore & Rennie, 1997 p. 161) perfectly describes the expectations of friendly accommodating learning and socialisation and the actual unwelcoming experiences and discrimination experienced by children with SEND placed in two mainstream schools in Guyana. The description of the curious gap presents the background and frames the physical and conceptual contexts within which I undertake this study. In this chapter, the rationale for my study is given through the autobiography of the question. The concept of metamorphosis in education, as it is used in my study, is presented and explains the changes in Guyana's mainstream education system which affects the experiences of children with SEND. The physical context, which is the country and more specially the two participating schools are highlighted. Connections are made to the conceptual contexts of inclusive education in Guyana. Also, it includes the limitations of my study and the outline of the thesis.

#### **1.1 Context and Background**

The conceptualisation and contextualisation of Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) in Guyana are still in the nascent stages of disability discourses. The discursive field of disability, as it is mapped in official discourse in the UK, does not yet exist in Guyana - and has not yet made its way into the education system. Consequently, earlier and specifically more community based views of disability are still dominant. Guyana has not yet developed an official definition of disability. More specifically, it is still implementing programmes for the identification of special needs in early childhood and even embraces the individual deficit model of disability (often



referred to as the medical model) as the dominant discourse (Cheong, Lashley, Mitchell & Kellems, 2019).

I investigate the experiences of children with SEND in two mainstream primary schools in postcolonial Guyana. I was a senior mainstream teacher in Grade Six for over a decade in one of the schools studied. During that time, I saw many children with SEND pass through mainstream primary schools in Guyana without benefiting from the learning experiences provided. Two distinct cases concerning children with SEND from this period are presented here:

*The first is Aquennie who is now 17 years old. He has completed both mainstream primary and secondary schools without any reasonable adjustments to the classroom or school facilities and structures being made or additional specialist instruction given to him. However, he faced the challenges and survived, but he should not have had to face these challenges without adjustments. Aquennie was born with an impaired right arm making physical activity very challenging. He also suffered daily abuse and was called names such as; 'one wing', 'Mongol', 'deviant' and 'biological reject'. Aquennie could not keep up with writing and other activities requiring the use of his right arm. I met him one day behind the school in tears; he was crying because the teacher had told him he was "holding back" her class, and she did not know why he did not stay at home.*

*The second case is Armala who was a Hindu child from a wealthy family. She had multiple physical impairments and was also significantly smaller than the average year six child. She could neither read nor write. She found social interactions frustrating. The children in her class teased her and called her names like 'family curse and sins'. Unlike Aquennie, Armala, left the school after just one month and never returned to neither mainstream nor special schooling.*

These memories illustrate some of the many negative experiences that children with SEND face in mainstream primary schools in Guyana. Moreover, such experiences were the rationale for conducting this research. The challenges to inclusion experienced by Aquennie were because Guyanese cultural attitudes, expressed and practiced by both his peers and teachers, saw Aquennie as the 'problem' and did not give him the

opportunity to participate in school activities. In Armala's situation, the use of the notion of a family curse or a sin implies that disability was '*evil*' or maybe a sign of evil and this evil was a part of Armala. This kind of exclusionary practice was evident within the two mainstream schools I studied in postcolonial Guyana.

SEND experts in Guyana (see Ajodhia-Andrews, 2007; Andrews & Frankel, 2010; Fraser, 2014; Lashley, 2017; Mitchell, 2005), parents of children with SEND and other stakeholders in education have indicated in previous studies that Guyana's mainstream education environment is unsuitable for children with SEND. It also became apparent to me that these children may be facing more than environmental challenges in mainstream primary schools as is also documented by other researchers cited above. It seems that Guyanese children with SEND do not receive the educational opportunities they need in order for them to achieve in comparison to their peers who are labelled as SEND free. In sum, there is uncontested evidence to indicate that the culture, discourses and discursive practices of the mainstream primary schools are not sufficiently inclusive to accommodate and value children with SEND. These children face multiple barriers within the structure of the organisation and with perception and discourses on SEND that are present in mainstream primary schools in Guyana.

Several authors (Ainscow, 2010; Ainscow & César, 2006; Andrews & Frankel, 2010; Singal, 2016 & Tomlinson, 2017) have indicated that children with SEND continue to be the most marginalised and excluded group. Globally, a high percentage of children have been deprived of an education because of their exceptionalities (Cook, Rutt & Sims, 2014; Florian, 2012; UNESCO, 2017). Locally, statistics reveal that approximately 16,500 children out of Guyana's approximately 740,000 citizens are deprived of an education because of their exceptionalities (Bureau of Statistics, Government of Guyana, 2018). As a result, many disabled persons in Guyana live in poverty (Guyana Preliminary Census Report, 2012, 2018).

In Guyana, SEND has been an area that has attracted very little research and interest to date. While the few studies available have provided essential knowledge about education for children with SEND and the discourse on disability in Guyana, they do not offer the reader stories told by the children themselves. As a consequence, we are lacking their perspectives. Without their perspectives we cannot begin a framing of

disability that uses the social model to understand what needs to change in the environment to enable them to participate more fully.

My study provided an opportunity for children with SEND in Guyana to share their educational and socialisation experiences and also their achievements with respect to mainstream schooling. Conducting this study also provided an opportunity to document the direct reflections of children with SEND. It is this direct reflection of children that was not captured in other studies in Guyana that I perused. In the next part of this chapter, I provide a rationale and personal motive for this study, which, in other words, is the autobiography of the question (Miller, 1995).

## **1.2 The Autobiography of the Question**

**Question: What are the experiences of children with SEND placed in mainstream primary schools in Guyana?**

*Children with SEND in Guyana can achieve, as mainstream teachers, we need to believe in our capacity to enable their ability to achieve.*

(Lashley 2017, p.16)

My functional role as (i) a mainstream Grade Six teacher for over a decade; (ii) a member of the Senior Leadership Team of my school; and (iii) a member of the School Improvement Advisory Committee placed me in a position that caused internal conflicts with my education philosophies, ideologies and my professional obligations. Philosophically, I believed that all children could achieve educational targets, but with different goals in mind. However, if the goals were to be similar, each would be achieved at a different pace. Ideologically, I believed that, with support as well as suitable and adequate resources, teachers could help children achieve set academic benchmarks irrespective of impairments or individually different circumstances.

Prior to completing the M.A. in Special Education Needs, I was unaware of the social model of disability and SEND. Correspondingly, I thought that children with impairments only had individual deficits because that was the common conception embedded in the discourse within mainstream education in Guyana. Children who face

challenges in their daily learning were considered as '*slow children*' or '*late bloomers*'. I believed it was a teacher's task to provide disabled children with the same learning experiences as any other child without modifications. My lesson plans made no provision to accommodate children with SEND. They were generically prepared for the cognitively able children with well-developed verbal language skills.

While I watched my classes achieve national benchmarks in norm-referenced assessments, I felt guilty. I became aware of my bias and the fact that my focus was more on the assessments given and that I did not truly consider the needs, interests and diversity of the children within my classes. As a generic rule, once my school's national assessment results surpassed the results of the other schools, I was deemed successful. It did not matter if I had children with educational and social needs that were unmet after an entire school year in my class or any other classes which I supervised. My professional obligations compelled me to continue with this practice as it impacted on annual school improvement and on my appraisals, which were excellent, depended on it.

However, my first MEd, in Curriculum and Instruction, caused me to reflect on my practices. Simultaneously, I began observing and analysing the delivery of the primary curriculum in the education district in which I worked. It was then that I realised the extent of my colleagues' and my inflexibility in implementing a standard curriculum delivery. We worked solely towards the achievement of national education attainment benchmarks to be named as being effective teachers. In the quest to be seen as effective teachers, my colleagues used lessons with learning experiences tailored to the perceived ideal child of a mainstream school. I observed that the children who could not manage the learning experiences and opportunities designed for one specific, ideal group of children, suffered silently. Such modes of pedagogy did not reflect inclusivity. The children's differences were not considered in the learning experiences and the children were left with unmet needs.

Such approaches to standardised curriculum delivery, neglected children who could not cope with the rate of work or who were not at the cognitive and verbal language development level expected of a mainstream Grade Six child. The standardised curriculum delivery approach employed by teachers also contributed to the disabling experiences in mainstream schools for many children. Its use was embedded in the

value systems and discursive practices of mainstream schools. In 2015, Guyana received a financial grant from UNICEF for special education needs provision (Ministry of Education, Guyana, 2015) and started placing more children with SEND in mainstream schools without provision for additional support. Furthermore, there was no restructuring in the organisation of mainstream schools, no SEND training for mainstream teachers and was no attempt to employ persons trained in SEND in mainstream schools to meet the needs of these students.

Human actions occur in the natural and social world and these actions are transformative (Bourdieu, 1990). As Bourdieu argued, actions take priority over thought. During my interaction with mainstream teachers, some of them informed me that they were aware that some of their actions were not inclusive and that they did not possess the knowledge needed to meet the needs of children with SEND. Other teachers were of the opinion that their current practices were working, and their non-inclusive actions were justified because it was socially and culturally accepted and normalised.

I was reminded by a mainstream colleague that I was once ranked an outstanding teacher in terms of children's performance at the National Grade Six Assessment in Mathematics and Science. My colleague reminded me that I was recognised for using this same standard method of teaching for this assessment, and this was the method I was now criticising in relation to the discourses and experiences of children with SEND. The reminder from my colleague prompted further thoughtful reflective analysis. It was enlightening to know that the approach I was now saddened by, was the very approach I had practiced for more than a decade. I thought that I might have been practicing inclusivity indirectly, by conducting my lessons using different activities for children to grasp concepts in different ways, for example, the remedial one-on-one sessions, music, drama, and games I did with the children.

Subsequently, I took one year off teaching in Guyana. During this time, I completed a Masters in Special Education Needs (MA SEN). At the same time, I worked in a mainstream elementary Church of England school in South Norwood, London. In this school, the student population included children descended from Caribbean immigrants. While often more challenging, they shared many characteristics with Guyanese children. While teaching in London, I was directly involved in making provisions for these children; I was placed in my favourite class, Year Six.

For my MA SEN thesis, I researched *School culture and teachers' perspectives on SEND within Guyana's mainstream elementary school system*. Nearly all the teachers I spoke to had negative conceptions of teaching children with SEND. They felt it was more challenging to teach children with SEND and that these children negatively affected their class's overall performances. After I completed the MA and teaching experience in London, I returned to Guyana to challenge disabling discourses and misconceptions about children with SEND.

On my return to Guyana, I relinquished my role as an Education Officer and, despite being offered several promotions, I took up teaching posts at University of Guyana and at the Cyril Potter College of Education (Teachers Training College). I took up the teaching appointments because I believed the change could start with new teachers by introducing a new discourse on SEND. I felt that the best place to initiate the emerging dialogue was with trainee teachers and I started a new discourse on SEND in the modules I taught and the workshops I conducted for the Ministry of Education and carried it out for almost two years. Through my school visits and observations, I recognised that some changes in discourse and discursive practices were emerging because of the new competing dialogue on the social model of disability. The social model of disability still remains subordinated to the dominant individual deficit model of disability and children with SEND still face challenges. These challenges rest on the negative culture embedded in Guyanese society and, by extension, some mainstream teachers.

Guyana's last population census in 2002 revealed that around 2.2 per cent (n=16500) of its population; which is approximately seven hundred and forty thousand (N=740,000) is made up of children with an identified SEND who are not in school. Despite this census report being sixteen years old, the population of the country has not changed significantly. What has increased substantially is the number of children with a known SEND (Guyana Housing and Population Census Preliminary Report 2012; Bureau of Statistics, Government of Guyana, 2018). Moreover, the report from the Bureau of Statistics, Government of Guyana, 2018 is, in itself, another factor which has directly driven the need to study the experiences, opportunities and participation offered to children with SEND in mainstream primary schools. The series of reflective experiences I shared and revelation in the census report gave rise to the overarching

question for this study, *‘What are the experiences of children with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) placed in mainstream primary schools in Guyana?’*

This study is also personal because I am a national volunteer on the People with Disability Commission working with children with SEND in mainstream schools and their families across rural Guyana. I lived the depersonalising and discriminatory experiences of being excluded from experiences because of a speech challenge I had earlier in life. I was told I could not represent my school at national debates because I had problems producing the initial ‘h’ sound in words. Therefore, despite being one of the school’s top academic performers, I was excluded from national competitions which required the use of well-developed verbal language skills.

I also observed that my neighbour kept her disabled son out of school. This child suffered from speech impairment, but, like numerous other parents, his mother felt that there was nothing to help him in mainstream schools. I knew that not much had changed concerning the experiences and participation provided in the schools. I felt I had to make an effort to ensure all children receive the opportunities, experiences and participation needed in mainstream schools. In order to adequately contest the dominant discourse concerning the individual deficit model of disability, I first had to understand the experiences of children with SEND in mainstream primary schools in postcolonial Guyana.

Teachers' preference for a selected group of children is reflected in the differential treatment of children because of a SEND (Gbollie & Keamu, 2017; Vlachou, 1997 as cited in Carrington, 1999). Teachers' preferences are also illustrated in the learning experiences they provide. I am aware of these continuous preferential selections of children in the current mainstream education system. Preferential selection is the norm maintained by the collective consciousness and habitus of the mainstream teachers in Guyana's primary mainstream education system (Lashley, 2017; Mitchell, 2005).

The discrimination children with SEND face in the opportunities and experiences provided in mainstream schools is also evident in the social system in Guyana. Furthermore, according to Stetsenko (2005) and Walsh (2015), this form of discrimination is maintained through the discourses, discursive practices, curriculum and structure of the mainstream education system. Here, the discourse that children with SEND are unsuitable for mainstream school is perpetuated. This discourse

presents a narrative of children with SEND contributing to a decline in academic performance and placing a burden on the school's limited resources.

### **1.3 An Economic-Geographical Description of Guyana**

#### ***1.3.1 The Geography of Guyana***

The Cooperative Republic of Guyana is a developing multicultural, multiracial and postcolonial country. It is located at the apex of the South American continent. Guyana has an area of 83,000 square miles and a population of approximately seven hundred and forty thousand (740,000) citizens (Guyana Housing and Population Census Preliminary Report 2012; Bureau of Statistics, Government of Guyana, 2018). Guyana was a colony of Great Britain for one hundred and fifty-two (152) years. Her educational system was inherited from Britain, from whom independence was gained in 1966. As a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, Guyana has an ongoing relationship with Britain. It is also the only English-speaking country in South America as a result of its British colonial heritage and shares educational and trade relationships with other English speaking Caribbean countries through a regional organisation called Caricom.

The country is divided into four geographic (4) regions. The first is the Low Coastal Plain, which consists of the central urban cities and the rural coastlines of Guyana is where the majority of the population resides. I conducted my study within the rural parts of this region. The second, the Hilly Sand and Clay Region, consists of scattered hills and is known for its bauxite production. Thirdly, there is the Forested Highland Region, which is the largest natural region in Guyana. It is also the most productive region with gold, petroleum and diamond fields. Its population is predominantly native Amerindians who mostly speak their own languages. Amera (see chapter five) was from this region. The final region is the Interior Savannah, which is also referred to as the cattle country.

Guyana has eleven education departments, which are responsible for education provisions within their respective areas. Mainstream education is free and compulsory from the primary to secondary levels. At the Kindergarten level, education is free but not mandatory. To be a professionally certified teacher in Guyana, one needs to attend



the nation's only teachers' training college, the Cyril Potter College of Education, for two years. The college has a Special Education, Diagnosis and Assimilation Centre, opened in 2018 and still in its developmental stages, at its main campus at Turkeyen.

There are seven ethnic groups in Guyana and nine indigenous tribes which constitute the Amerindian ethnic group. While the official language of Guyana is English, Guyanese Creole is mainly spoken and accepted in its various dialects. Each of the nine Amerindian tribes speaks their own language, for example, Lokono, which is spoken by Amera (see chapter five). However, formal education is delivered in English.

### ***1.3.2 Guyana's Economic Status***

Guyana has had a postcolonial economy since it gained its independence from Great Britain in 1966. Guyana's relatively poor economic performance as a developing country resulted from the elevated interest rate in the liberalisation era. Guyana's economy has always been influenced by obstructed democracy which has not been consolidated for decades (Khemraj, 2016). In recent years, Guyana's economy as growth with the discovery of petroleum with exportation of oil set to commence in 2020. Prior, Guyana's economy was fuelled by agriculture and precious mineral. Guyana's agricultural activities are extensive with rice and sugar being the main crops rivalled by a booming fish industry and cash crops. Valuable minerals namely: gold, diamond, quartz and granite are in abundance in Guyana. Currently, the restructuring of Guyana's state-owned sugar company, Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo), contributed to a significant reduction in sugar production and consequently imports from sugar exports. Other agricultural activities, fishing and forestry, continue to boom. Public spending in Guyana has extended in the last five years, and the central government's fiscal deficit narrowed modestly. The extended federal spending has also been associated with remittances from overseas-based Guyanese and grants from international and regional monetary organisations. Annually, the government spending on education continues to increase. However, this increase remains concentrated on mainstream education. Government's spending on special education remains sparse.

## **1.4 Exploring the concept of ‘Inclusive Education’, A Guyanese Cultural Prospective**

*All children with disabilities will be allowed to access education in public schools in Guyana.*

(Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 25)

Consciousness and its products are always, though in variable forms, parts of the material social process itself idealised or illusory (Williams, 1977, p.67). The government of Guyana frames the placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools as ideal whereas the mainstream schools, communities, religious bodies, street discourses and parents of children without an identified SEND frame it as illusory, because of the dominance in belief and practice of excluding children with SEND from mainstream schools in Guyana (Fraser, 2014, Lashley, 2017). My experience in Guyana leads me to believe that mainstream school-teachers, and the others mentioned above, feel that the government practices and discourses on SEND are utopian. They feel the government practices and discourses on SEND do not consider past and present discourses and practices in mainstream schools, which form the common understanding of the unsuitability of children with SEND for mainstream school and mainstream schools for them. These two forms of consciousness are in competition in Guyanese society (personal communication, September, 2018).

Concepts like SEND are not seen as concepts but as problems, not as analytical problems but as historical movements that are still unresolved. As Williams (1977, p.69) says ‘There is no sense in listening to their sonorous sermons and resounding clashes. We have, only if we can, to recover the substance from which their forms were cast.’ The formation of the idea that mainstream schools are unsuitable for children with SEND was formed during Guyana’s colonial history and maintained by postcolonial governments; but the government wants the concept of inclusive education to change without taking the measures necessary to change this conceptualisation in the culture of society (Fraser, 2014). The concept of inclusive education is generally framed as a problem within mainstream schools by teachers and parents of children who do not have an identified SEND. The dominant discourse within the communities – that is, villages, churches, marketplaces and other social spaces – is that children with

SEND do not belong in mainstream school. This discourse is in competition with the governmental discourse that children with SEND could be placed in mainstream schools.

Due to the fluidity of the concept, whenever I refer to 'society', I mean the interplay of discourses (ways of conceptualising the world) between social agencies (schools, churches, markets places, recreational centres, hospitals, street corners, shops, bus stops etc) in the areas surrounding the schools. According to Williams (1977), new social relations, and the new kind of activity that are possible through them, may be imagined but cannot be achieved unless the determining limits of a particular mode of production are surpassed in practice, by actual social change. The challenge and resistance arise in Guyana because society, including mainstream teachers, has not imagined mainstream school as a place for children with SEND and thus upholds the previously established limits of mainstream school within its tradition as will be evident in subsequent chapters of the thesis.

Culture is both a tradition and a practice (Williams, 1977). There are three elements of the cultural process: institutions, traditions and formations. Tradition in practice is the most evident expression of the dominant and hegemonic pressures and limits of power. Inclusion in Guyana has always been contested structurally and culturally for generations from the colonial period to the present day (Non-Governmental Organisation [NGO], 2003; O'Toole & Maison Halls, 1994; O'Toole & Stout, 1998 as cited in Andrews and Frankel, 2010). During the colonial period, there was marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion of slaves and natives from some aspects of plantation life. It was the belief that slaves and natives were unsuitable for the aspects of the social structures from which they were excluded. One social structure reserved for the elites was education. For example, when the Europeans arrived, they met the indigenous Amerindians. Instead of cooperating with them, they emphasised colonial practices which marginalised them and caused them to recede deeper into the jungles (Forested Highland Regions) where they are still marginalised today. With colonisation, slavery and the rise of the sugar and tobacco plantations, segregation in society became the dominant culture in Guyana and its residue is presently active within mainstream schools. As a commonsense understanding, Guyanese believe in segregation (O'Toole & Maison Halls, 1994). Further, education in Guyana was denied to working class people, women, as well as indigenous people and those with SEND

and some forms of denying education access to selected groups is still expected now with the continued desire to deny children with SEND from being educated with their peers without an identified SEND who are classified as the elites suited to mainstream schooling.

The idea of Inclusive Education is emergent in Guyana's culture. It is still nascent and in its metamorphic stages and there is a long way to go before it can fully emerge or gain dominance from its cocoon as a fully *Inclusive Education system* in an inclusive society (Cheong, Kellems, Andersen, Steed, 2018; Fraser, 2014; Lashley, 2017; Mitchell, 2005). Although Guyana has a formal *zero-rejection* policy when it comes to registering and teaching children within their respective regions, it is not practised. On the contrary, children with SEND are often told that the mainstream primary schools in their neighbourhoods cannot mobilise the resources (human and material) to provide them with the necessary opportunities, experiences and socialisation, which they need. Children with SEND are also told that they are unsuitable for mainstream schools (Chouinard, 2012, 2015; O'Toole & Stout, 1998). Chouinard (2012, 2015) and O'Toole & Stout, (1998) noted that this form of institutional discrimination is also framed by conceptions of superiority and inferiority among ethnic groups which also leads to marginalisation. Further, Chouinard (2012, 2015) and O'Toole & Stout (1998), who are also native Guyanese researchers, say that parents opt to send their children to schools out of the neighbourhood or district through the belief that their children will be more welcomed and valued where the dominant discourse is reflective of their culture and ethnicity. This shows another form of segregation in society.

Booth and Ainscow (2002, 2011) indicated that schools and education districts should be putting inclusive values into action by reducing exclusion, discrimination and barriers to participation. In Guyana's mainstream education system these inclusive values could be embraced if, first, the discourse in education were to shift from an individual deficit model of disability to a social model and if, second, mainstream education hierarchy does not perceive this act as an interference to the percentages of children passing regional and national assessments. I am not in favour of maintaining these assessments. Mainstream teachers are appraised each school term as required by statute (Laws of Guyana, Education Act, Chapter 39:01). The termly appraisal scores are combined at the end of the school year. There is no section on the appraisal forms for the assessment of inclusive practices, however; a significant proportion of the

questionnaire focuses on children's academic performance and achievements in external assessments and is a major aspect of assessing teacher effectiveness. This combined assessment is directly linked to promotion, recognition and financial remuneration for mainstream teachers. The added pressures on mainstream teachers, which arise from the placement of children with SEND in their classroom can result in inclusion phobia (Robinson & Goodey, 2018), resistance and negative attitudes and practices within mainstream schools by mainstream teachers that negatively affect the experiences of children with SEND.

Multiple structural and institutional inequalities in the mainstream schools and in Guyanese society have shaped the present collective consciousness, and dominant discourse on SEND, and the attitudes and practices of mainstream teachers as well as parents. Structural and institutional inequalities have also shaped the experiences of children with SEND and made attempts at inclusive educational practices quasi-inclusive at best or non-inclusive at worst. Disabled people have identified inequalities, due to institutional discrimination, as the problem because of the distinction drawn between the social lives and interests of 'able-bodied' and disabled people (Barnes, 1992, 2007). Institutionalised forms of discrimination, direct as well as more subtle, contribute to wider marginalisation of children with SEND and damage their sense of self-worth and positive identity (Howarth & Andreouli, 2015).

In Guyana, when children with SEND cannot access the mainstream school in their communities, they have to attend special schools. Special education schools are highly centralised in the towns and children who reside in rural villages have to travel in some cases hundreds of miles to access such schools. Moreover, most teachers at the special education schools have not received specialised training in SEND. In most cases, the special school teachers are less qualified than their mainstream counterparts (Chouinard, 2012, 2015; Fraser, 2014; O'Toole & Stout, 1998). Either way, children with SEND are marginalised because of these institutionalised and structural discriminatory barriers. These negative attitudes and discriminatory practices, which effectively deny basic human rights to children with SEND, are ingrained in the education institutional practices and society in Guyana.

Currently, inclusive education in Guyana's mainstream education system means placing children with SEND in mainstream schools without any form of modification

being made to the educational culture, discursive practices or structure (Ajodhia-Andrews, 2007; Andrews & Frankel, 2010; Fraser, 2014; Lashley, 2017; Mitchell, 2005). Once the child with SEND can access the building, and the limited resources therein, s/he is placed in a mainstream school in a quasi-inclusive education practice. Most of Guyana's mainstream school buildings are not disability friendly. Therefore, there is often no independent access for persons with limited mobility. In the schools, the resources are not modified, and the same standardised curriculum is expected to be delivered regardless of the circumstances of individual children (see chapter seven). The mainstream teachers do not have any decentralised authority to modify the curriculum, but they are expected to provide meaningful learning and socialisation experiences for children with SEND. According, to Dr Barbara Reynolds, one of the former deputy vice chancellors at the University of Guyana, this is unfair to the teachers as too much is already expected from the overworked mainstream teachers in Guyana. This normalised practice increases the possibility of exclusion and makes it difficult for children with SEND to function in mainstream schools. It is important to note that this practice is not policy driven because, as has been stated previously, Guyana does not have a formally written inclusive education policy or framework.

## **1.5 Research Objective and Questions**

### ***1.5.1 Objectives of Research***

My objectives for my study were:

- RO1:** To explore the experiences and achievements of children with SEND in mainstream primary schools in Guyana through the voices of children with SEND.
- RO2:** To explore the extent to which mainstream primary school teachers make adjustments and curriculum modifications to include children with SEND fully.
- RO3:** To develop a social model framework for inclusion, possibly adapted from Loreman (2009) and Booth and Ainscow's (2002, revised 2011) school-based social model frameworks, for use in Guyanese schools.

### ***1.5.2 Research Questions***

My overarching question is ‘**What are the experiences of children with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) placed in Guyana’s mainstream primary schools?**’ The subsidiary questions are:

- 1: What can we learn about children with SEND experiences and feelings concerning mainstream schooling from what they say and do?
- 2: What, if any, adjustments and curriculum modifications do mainstream teachers make to include children with SEND?
- 3: Can Loreman (2009) and Booth and Ainscow’s (2002, 2011) school-based social model frameworks be adapted contextually so that a specific framework can be used more widely across Guyana, to support schools to make a positive difference to the experience of children with SEND in schools?

## **1.6 Introduction to the schools**

### ***Saints Primary School***

Saints Primary School is located on the coastland of Guyana. In this multicultural administrative region, the division among cultures is visible in the many smaller villages which make it up. All schools in Guyana are graded ‘A’ to ‘E’ dependent upon the size of the student population. This school is a Grade B school with a student population of five hundred and ten (510) pupils. The school serves three major ethnic groups, those of: African descent, East Indians descent, and some native Amerindians who were born on the coastlands. There are a small minority of children who are of mixed ethnicity. There are sometimes racial conflicts between the East Indians and Africans in the community. These conflicts, which are also reflected in mainstream schools, are deployed power struggles to exert racial and cultural dominance (Gibson, 2006).

In terms of ethnicity, 90 percent of the mainstream teachers of Saints Primary School are of African descent, while the student population is 50 per cent African. Ten per cent of the teachers are of East Indian decent, while 40 per cent of the student population is also East Indian. The other ten per cent of the school population comprises

Amerindians and mixed race. All the teachers at Saints Primary School are qualified though a few are newly qualified.

Saints Primary is a two-storey building, with stair access at both levels. There are no provisions for access for persons with limited mobility. Classes are separated from each other by the use of screens and chalkboards. Similar to most mainstream primary schools in Guyana, this school's focus is on student's performance at the National Grade Six Assessment. The school emphasises that anything worth achieving is worth working for, and this is the guiding philosophy for both teachers and students.

At Saints, children with SEND are constantly reminded that they have to try harder, but little is done to help them in this regard. The successful high achievers attend private lessons after school in order to get additional learning experiences and support. It is ironic that the children who do not require the support can benefit from this opportunity, while those who need the support cannot afford access as the average parents often cannot afford to pay for the private after school lessons.

While there are clearly some problems for SEND students at Saints, according to the 2017 report by the Monitoring Evaluating and Reporting Department, Saints Primary School has been improving significantly in the area of Mathematics at the National Grade Six Assessment (NGSA). The teachers at Saints Primary School are proud of this achievement and intend to maintain this good progress.

The school shares its compound with an Anglican church as is the case for many schools in Guyana because education historically started with the missionaries and churches. Moreover, Saints Primary School is deeply entwined in the culture and religion of its community. These are activities which are traditional to the dominant African culture. There is the annual African Emancipation Celebration that is celebrated more extravagantly than the annual Indian Arrival Day celebrations. According to the head teacher, (personal communication, June 25, 2018), the school does not have a SEND policy but tries to welcome all children to the school.

### ***Angel Primary School***

Angel Primary School is located within the business centre of the same region. The school is also a 'B' grade school with 560 pupils. Angel Primary School is located at the centre of an East Indian community, and their culture dominates the school. This



school also serves some other smaller neighbouring multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-race villages.

In terms of ethnicity, 58 percent of the mainstream teachers are of East Indian decent, with the student population being 90 per cent ethnically Indian. 33 per cent of the teachers are ethnically African, with students of African descent making up eight percent of the school population. Amerindians, who were born on the coastland, make up nine percent of the teaching staff while about two percent of the student population is Amerindian and Mixed race. All of the teachers are qualified with several being newly qualified.

This school does not share its compound with a church. It is an entirely concrete and semi-modern two-storeyed building. Angel Primary has stair access to both levels of the building. There is no access provision for persons with limited mobility and the classes are accommodated in separate rooms. This structure means there is less distraction for children from noise from neighbouring classes.

This school's focus is also on children's performance at the National Grade Six Assessment, (NGSA). The school's focus on children's performance is also supported by the local business community which celebrates the academic success of the children and teachers by giving them monetary awards and prizes. The Ministry of Education also recognises the school for its good academic performance. Academically inclined children are provided with considerable financial support by the school business alumni for attendance at private lessons. Children who are struggling are provided with after school support by a local non-governmental organisation from the community. The school culture is quite different to that of Saints Primary School. With technology emerging as a major force, the students are also taught ICT skills as part of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) project in Guyana.

According to the 2017 report by the Monitoring Evaluating and Reporting Department, Angel Primary School has achieved high academic performance in Mathematics for more than three consecutive years. The school also does not have a SEND policy. The administration makes it clear that the school cannot accommodate specific children with additional needs (Head teacher, personnel communication, June 26, 2018) and they are unwilling to adjust to accommodate specific groups of children.

## **1.7 A Comparison of Saints and Angel Primary Schools**

### **Similarities**

Both schools are 'B' Grade primary schools located in the centre of the community they serve, with over 500 children in each. Similarly, the buildings are both used by their communities to transmit and celebrate their different cultures e.g. community days, public talks and community outreach programmes. They also both receive support from the community and have a fully qualified mainstream teaching staff. Both schools have won community and national recognition in some areas of education delivery. There is no such recognition in the area of SEND. Neither school has a SEND policy or framework. Both schools pursue high academic performance at the National Grade Six Assessment, and both did exceptionally well on their school assessments. Neither school failed in any areas assessed on the School Improvement Assessment but, there was no component of the evaluation, which focused on SEND.

### **Differences**

Saints Primary School shares its compound with the local church while Angel Primary School has its own compound. Saints Primary School has a large African student population in contrast to Angel Primary School, which has a large East Indian student population. The teaching staff at Saints Primary School is predominantly African, while at Angel Primary, it is predominantly East Indian. There are more male teachers at Angel Primary School than they are at Saints Primary (see Appendix C and D, p. 352, 353).

The community in Angel Primary School provides more academic support for children from low-income families. The school and the community are more inclined to celebrate student's achievement at Angel Primary School and have far greater financial resources. Concerning nutrition in the schools, Angel Primary School has a more diverse food range. One might think that the variety in meals is not something to highlight, however, this diversity in food reflects a cultural contrast which may influence education within Angel Primary School.

The children at Saints Primary School are more athletic and excel in sports, poetry, drama and music. Furthermore, the teachers at Angel Primary School enjoy considerable freedom and independence within their classrooms, while at Saints Primary, the teachers are more likely to be monitored and supervised by the senior leadership team and their children tend to pose much more of a challenge to manage. However, the teachers there seem more resilient and resourceful in dealing with challenging behaviours than their colleagues at Angel Primary School.

At Saints Primary School, there are more teacher-made instructional resources, while at Angel Primary School there are more ICT resources and commercially produced instructional materials. There is also a local library in the community of Angel Primary School and the churches, while influential, are more separate from school life.

## **1.8 The Education System Cycle in Guyana**

### ***1.8.1 The metamorphosis of Guyana's mainstream education system***

*Society is changing, and the education sector in Guyana will respond to these changes by developing and transforming into an education system inclusive for all.*

(Guyana's Minister of Education – Dr Nicolette Henry, Guyana, 2017)

Metamorphosis is a biological concept. However, the metaphor can also be used in an educational and social concept. Metamorphosis in education has a direct impact on the experiences of all children and teachers in mainstream schools. I embrace the term metamorphosis to narrate the experiences of the children with SEND because it illuminates the series of changes that contribute to the experiences of children with SEND. Educating children in a rapidly transforming nation is a dynamic and challenging process. On one hand, some policies and practices are (almost) always changing. On the other hand, some beliefs remain constant. Remaining constant in the two schools is the belief that organising learning experiences according to learning styles meets the needs of children with SEND. Several researchers (Bjork, Dunlosky & Kornell, 2013; Byrne et al., 2017; Jarvela, 2006; King, 2017; Massa & Mayer, 2006; Cook et al., 2009) have argued that actively trying to cater for children based on their learning styles does not meet their individual learning needs. Yet, researchers such as

Kirschner (2017) argue that it does actually open more possibilities for considering individual needs than a one pedagogic style fits all approach. It is these possibilities that are important to children with SEND.

Advances in knowledge and theories are readily available to any education system in a similar stage of developmental to Guyana. However, like almost anywhere else most changes in Guyana are politically orchestrated rather than guided by research and empirical evidence. I observed that these changes occurred so frequently that one programme/project/policy/intervention is never fully completed before the next big “idea” in education begins and is pushed within mainstream education. Notably, this study was funded because ‘special education’ is now being introduced to Guyana. Further, changes are also sometimes pushed by large international funding agencies like the Commonwealth, UNICEF, UNESCO, and, in some cases, by Caricom through the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB).

The metamorphosis process evident in Guyana’s educational system is strictly linear and is highly autocratic, with centralised control from the government through the Ministry of Education. Within the eleven educational departments, there is very little room for adaptation or modification to cater for the unique circumstances or the educational and cultural contexts that exist. Limiting the possibilities for adaptation or modification follows the education ideology of *one size fits all*. However, there is no one solution in education that will fit all contexts, needs, diversities and the uniqueness of individual children (Chung & Chea, 2016; Hazelkorn, 2014; UNESCO, 2017). This *one size fits all* ideology, which is controlled by the central education hierarchy, excludes some children by not catering for their individual learning needs, preferences, interests, background, readiness and, more specifically, their culture (Lashley, 2017, 2019).

Recently, Guyana has gone through several rapid changes in its educational ideology. However, from my observations, there are no significant changes in the experiences of children with SEND in mainstream education within postcolonial Guyana, despite these ideological changes. One such change is evident through the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), which now governs Guyana’s National Grade Six Assessment, (NGSA). This assessment is a placement examination for primary school students to enter secondary schools. This change in the administration of NGSA is one of the many

initiatives of the new educational ideology (Ministry of Education, 2018). The first set of results from this institutional change showed a significant decline in Mathematics performance for all children across the country. The change in assessment without modifications in curriculum delivery and learning experiences has seemingly not benefitted children in primary schools in Guyana.

As the metamorphosis of Guyana's education system continued, mathematics intervention was introduced countrywide, which entailed linking teaching the subject to the local school context in order to enhance conceptual understanding. Although this intervention was made so that children with SEND could benefit from the mathematics curriculum, no benefit was forthcoming. No benefit was forthcoming because the teachers continued to teach only to achieve standardised assessment passes, which were still declining (Ministry of Education, 2018). The teachers' actions made me wonder how children with SEND could survive, considering their impairments, coupled with the barriers to experiences and socialisation, while still being required to take the same assessments offered in mainstream schools without reasonable adjustments being made. As I have already highlighted (see above and Lashley, 2017), some teachers have negative conceptions about teaching children with SEND, especially in classes which take the National Grade Six Assessment.

The reality of these two influencing factors is pivotal to understanding the limitations of the teaching, learning and socialisation interactions in mainstream primary schools for children without SEND, and more so children with SEND. The metamorphosis occurring in Guyana's mainstream education system has implications for children with SEND. Hence, Guyana's mainstream education needs to progress further along in the process of metamorphosis, since children with SEND have already been placed in mainstream schools. If the mainstream educational system is changing, it should also change to meet the needs of 'New Millennium Learners' especially those with SEND (OECD, 2008; UNESCO, 2017).

In the context of the military, soldiers completing a fitness run along a prescribed route do not reach the finish line all at the same time. The soldiers will not finish at the same time because of their individual differences. They do not all possess the same strength, endurance, stamina, or desire to complete the run, resulting in them finishing at different times. Other contributory factors might also include their background,

experiences, and readiness for the run. While all the soldiers are on the same mission, they each accomplish it at their own pace. The same principle is applicable to children in the mainstream education system. While the children may all be working towards their NGA or GCSE or CSEC completion, which is the common goal, they would not all achieve it by the same means or at the same pace. And, some would never achieve it, but the number who don't could be reduced by inclusive education. Exams and tests inherently require some to fail.

### ***1.8.2 Changes in Professional Hierarchy in Education and its impact on Special Education***

Of the many senior professional positions within education in Guyana, three of those positions carry the responsibility for the discourses, practices and provisions related to SEND. They are the Chief Education Officer (CEO), the director of the National Centre for Education Resource Development (NCERD), and the National Special Education Needs Officer (NSEN). The Chief Education Officer is the most senior professional appointment within the educational system in Guyana. The person holding this position has direct contact with the country's Minister of Education and reports directly to him/her. These three senior personnel together with their support staff are supposed to work to ensure that children with SEND and other vulnerabilities are placed in mainstream education.

They face numerous challenges, generated by the differences in their philosophies on SEND. Presently, the national SEND Officer (NSEN) is the only person who holds a postgraduate qualification in the area of SEND, but is also the most junior of the officers. The chain of command with regards to the three professional senior officers is organised and connected as follows: there is the Chief Education Officer (CEO); then there is the director of NCERD, who is the immediate supervisor of the national Special Education Needs Officer.

In the immediate past, a junior academic member of staff from the University of Guyana was appointed principal advisor to the then education minister and he was subsequently appointed the Chief Education Officer. This newly appointed ministerial

advisor/CEO was responsible for driving the metamorphosis in mainstream education. As the CEO was an academic, many of these changes in policies and practices were guided by research-based evidence. The CEO's appointment was the first of this type of appointment in the educational system of Guyana. However, the junior academic faced resistance from other senior professional officers in education and, while these conflicts were on going, children with SEND were side-lined. The advisor/CEO had commenced implementation of some policies and practices for children with SEND guided by the Disability Act of 2010. Unfortunately, there was a change in the government, and this gave rise to a new metamorphosis in education (Ministry of Education, 2018).

With a new government formed in May 2015, a new Chief Education Officer was appointed who was one of the senior education officers from the education ministry. He has committed to a new stage in the metamorphosis by strongly advocating the placement of children with SEND in mainstream education. However, the placement of children in mainstream education has become the priority without making many of the vital modifications necessary for the successful placement of these children into mainstream schools. As such, children with SEND are facing disablement, depersonalisation and numerous other challenges in mainstream schools, especially those in rural areas (Cheong et al, 2018, 2019; Lashley, 2017).

The director of NCERD supports the principles, policies and practices of the Chief Education officer. NCERD houses the SEND unit of the Ministry of Education, and this unit is headed by the national SEND Officer (NSENIO). The national SEND Officer is supported by four SEND Officers, (tier 2 level) in the SEND unit at NCERD. Additionally, each of the ten administrative regions has an appointed SEN Officer at tier 1 level (Ministry of education, 2018).

The limitation of knowledge and skills in the area of SEND within the SEND unit makes it challenging for schools to provide experiences and socialisation for children with SEND. It further frames the kind of support they receive from the ministry of education. The limitation affects children who are placed within these environments, with no adequate support. Limitations in knowledge and skills of teachers, educators and administrators negatively affect the learning experiences of all children (Chetty, Friedman & Rockoff, 2011; Dunlosky et al., 2013; Korpershoek et al., 2016; Sabrina & Sansrisna, 2017).

In its quest to develop into a 21<sup>st</sup> century education system, the education system in Guyana is fractured by many limitations. There are limitations in the discourses about SEND in the literature related to Guyana's situation. Further, there are limitations in the country's capacity in the mainstream schools to adequately accommodate children with SEND. There are many good ideas and practices evident in this system, which have been introduced through the metamorphosing process. However, it still has to develop further to provide the necessary experiences and socialisation for the children with SEND placed in the two mainstream primary schools studied.

## **1.9 My Southern Position**

My study reflects Connell's (2007) conception of Southern Theory. What Connell, calls 'Southern theory' is not precisely an indigenous knowledge project, nor primarily a critique of Eurocentrism. It is synonymous with the knowledge I produced from postcolonial experiences and Connell (2007) emphasise this as central to the idea of Southern theory. My study is more than a *colonial encounter* (Connell, 2007, p.104) in the global South.

She suggests that the classification of the world as global North and South is binary for knowledge stratification and emphasises inequalities among university (knowledge) systems. Being from the side of the division referred to as 'the periphery', the accepted practise is to supply data, and later to apply knowledge in the form of technology, theory and pedagogy from the global North (Collyer, 2018; Connell, 2011). The North's role is exemplified as collators of data, theory and producers of pedagogy which can be applied without contextualisation once exported to the periphery. I hope like Connell, (2011), Keim (2011) and Murphy and Zhu (2012) to try to position the global South as more than rich in data but rich in intellectuals. If I exclude my study from the realm of Southern Theory, I would be practising a form of exclusion similar to the exclusion experienced by the children who participated in my research.

Further, the dominance of the National Grade Six Assessment in primary schools within Guyana idealises inequalities and exclusion in mainstream schools. The recognition given to teachers and children who excelled in this assessment colonises and excludes children with SEND who seldom succeed at standards celebrated. I recognise this treatment as colonisation in a postcolonial state. Children with SEND in



this system as it is cannot take control of being positioned on the lowest tier of socialisation and acceptance in society. Many other researchers in the area of disability from Guyana (Ajodhia-Andrews, 2007; Andrews & Frankel, 2010; Cheong et al., 2018, 2019; Fraser, 2014; Mitchell, 2005) have described this peripheral position of children with SEND. Through this study, I frame a platform to understand their position and formulate indigenous theory and pedagogy in the global South to support them.

There is a lack of democratisation in the mainstream schools I studied. According to Epstein and Morrell (2012), there need to be democratisation and equal recognition of the parts in the whole knowledge system. Provisions for children without SEND dominate the school resources and curriculum, and like theory from the global South, the provision for children with SEND is the periphery. They are treated as data sources for locals with global North funding like myself and global North researchers with global South interest. This practise further exacerbates the borderlines between the two groups of children in Guyana. Epstein and Morrell, (2012) also made clear the importance of addressing forms inequality inclusive of race, class and sexuality. I add to their emphasis by stating that the inequalities based on impairment embedded in an ableism society need to be addressed. This could decolonise the experience of children with SEND.

In chapter 2.4 - Inclusive Education in the global South, I further elaborate on my Southern position. I use the work of researchers such as Franck and Joshi, (2017) and Meekosha, (2008, 2011) to emphasise the colonising connotation (Damiani et al., 2016) of inclusive education. I also present my global South position with reference to Colombia and Brazil, which share the same global position geographically and politically and a similar context to Guyana. Meekosha and Soldatic (2011) argued that many of the everyday experiences of disabled people in the global South lie outside the reach of human rights instruments. Throughout my analysis and discussion chapters (chapters five to eight) the Southern embodiment of my study is deeply reflected as I presented and interpreted the experiences of the children and their teachers. My interpretations support Meekosha and Soldatic's argument.

## **1.10 Limitation of Study**

While this study makes several significant contributions to knowledge about the experiences of children with SEND in Guyana within the global South, it is limited to Guyana and is not a total representation of the global South. Even though my study reflects the experiences of children with SEND in postcolonial Guyana, it was conducted in only one of Guyana's ten administrative and natural regions (See 1.3 The Demography of Guyana) and there are other unique characteristics and factors of the other regions (see discussion of Amera in chapter five) which were not studied as they relate to the experiences of children with SEND in those administrative regions.

## **1.11 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is organised in four sections and nine chapters. Following the introductory chapter, chapter two presents a comprehensive analysis of the literature related to the phenomenon being studied and the theories that underpin the discussion. This chapter also examines the theoretical frameworks (poststructuralist theory and social model of disability) I embraced. These two chapters complete section one.

Section two comprises chapters three and four. The former focuses the philosophies (research, ethical and methodological), principles and approaches employed in the methodology. This chapter provides an explanation of how this research project is situated in relation to the experiences of children with SEND in the two schools for the purpose of data gathering. It also explores how I situated myself in the mainstream primary education system in Guyana and interacted with the participants in the schools. The latter focuses on data analysis through the development of situational and relational maps, analysis and interpretation. This chapter presents how I used situational analysis to understand the experiences of children with SEND through its theory/method approach to data analysis.

Chapters five, six, seven and eight make up section three. Data presentation and analysis are presented in these chapters. Chapter five is divided into five parts and answers research questions 1 and 2. In chapter five, I argue that the inclusion of children with SEND in these two schools is, in practice, a form of exclusion. This form of exclusion is perpetrated through a pervasive system of discrimination that oppresses

children whose identities do not fit the normalised expectations of children suitable for mainstream schools. I reveal that some children face obstacles to learning, due to the physical environment, pedagogical styles expected of the teachers, racism and limited resources.

In chapter six, I show the ubiquity of the metaphor of lanes in the schools where I did my fieldwork. I illustrate how restricted lanes marginalise and depersonalise children with SEND and endanger rather than preserve their safety. I highlight the discriminatory barriers to participation and socialisation which underpin the expected status, behaviours, attitudes, participations, achievement, and acceptance of children with SEND. I argue that the '*Stay in your lane*' directive and expectation is maintained in the value system of the school and society. I highlight the feelings of children with SEND, emphasising the anxiety and loneliness they experience because of the isolation and depersonalisation created by the lane surveillance. Additionally, I explore the tiered structure for the acceptance of children with SEND in mainstream schools here.

The expressions of opposition to the installation of children with SEND in mainstream schools by the general student population through schoolyard complaints at both Angel and Saints Primary Schools are presented in chapter seven and the contrasting, yet similar, stories of Ceon and Thomas are also presented here. I argue that this situation is produced by competing discourses in the field of inclusive education in Guyana. I also examine how children with SEND are subjected to experiences of bullying and teachers' treatment of such children who are perceived as challenging. I also discuss the two different aspects of the resistance to the placement of children with SEND in the schools under study.

Chapter eight aims to answer research question 3 and analyses the Inclusive Frameworks from the global North. I highlight areas where potential challenges and opportunities for adapting the two frameworks by looking at each point of both Loreman's and Booth and Ainscow's work. I also present an adapted framework specifically tailored for schools in Guyana. To support such a change, I also present a support tool, The Southern Inclusive Checker for the Southern Inclusive Framework I introduce in this chapter to enable the teachers show more support for inclusivity in the two schools.

Section four consists of chapter nine, which is the conclusion of this thesis. It presents the common perceptions on experiences of children with SEND in mainstream primary schools in postcolonial Guyana. It presents a summary of the spread of marginalisation and discrimination in mainstream schools and the implications, while also indicating possible areas for future research.

## **Chapter Two: The Utopian and Dystopian Rhetoric of**

### **Discourses and Dilemmas in SEND**

*I know, and I know that is not right for teachers to treat children the way my teacher treated me today and every other day that she talk me down or ignore me. I hate the witch. She is the wicked witch of Oz.*

(Macy, age 11, Interview, November, 2018)

### **2.0 Introduction**

In chapter one, I explored the context and background of my study and highlighted the rationale through the autobiography of the question. I presented the demography of Guyana, exploring inclusive education in the Guyanese context. The schools participating in my study, were introduced, and important terms were explained. In addition, metamorphosis was explored as a biological concept, which can also be used metaphorically as an educational and social concept. As was indicated by Guyana's Minister of Education, Dr Nicolette Henry (2017), Guyana's education sector is developing and transforming into an education system inclusive for all. The previous chapter also focused on the metamorphosis of the mainstream education system and its impacts the practices in the two mainstream schools I studied.

In this chapter I discuss literature related to SEND internationally, in the global South and postcolonial Guyana. The literature reports on incidents that are concerned with the placement of children like Macy (see above) in mainstream schools. It presents discourses of SEND, especially in relation to the emotions of these children. The discourses in this chapter shed light on why children with SEND, such as Macy, are of the belief that their teachers are like the "wicked witch of Oz". Also, in this chapter I examine the social model of disability as the theoretical framework of my study. In the first section of the chapter, I also show why the social model of disability was not adequate on its own to analyse the experiences of the children with SEND. I argue that a poststructuralist lens could be used along with the social model of disability to analyse and understand the experiences of the children with SEND. In addition, I reflect on the perspectives of the individual deficit model of disability and also reveal how inclusive education, a global North concept, is applied in the global South.

In the latter section of the chapter, I highlight the power relationship at play between the children and their mainstream teachers. I place emphasis on the power relationship at play and its implications for the Normalisation for children with SEND placed in the mainstream education systems. Finally, I consider how the laws of Guyana like other countries influence the SEND provisions and teachers training to be effective in neighbourhood mainstream schools.

## **2.1 The Social Model of Disability Framework**

*My school crucifies me. I am always targeted; I am still the problem. Teachers are never wrong, and the school is perfect.*

(Ceon, July 2018, Interview)

My theoretical approach to disability draws on the social model of disability (Oliver 1990, 2009, 2013). The social model of disability is linked with Marxist ideological approaches or civil rights approaches and political activism to enable disabled in society (Dell'Anna et al, 2019; Oliver, 1990; Owens, 2015) and rooted in the 80s. It draws on working class, black, and feminist liberation movements for its theoretical guidance. The social model of disability does not perceive individuals with impairments as people with disabilities but rather sees their disabilities as a product of lack of material support in society which creates disabling barriers (Oliver, 1990; 2009; 2013). The social model of disability does not see Ceon as the problem rather it sees the barriers he faces which led him to call his school his crucifier. The social model challenges policies and practices which discriminate against and marginalise people with impairments in society and schools by enabling them to claim their rightful place in society (Kumar & Dwivedi, 2017; Owens, 2015). It recognises the existence of impairment as not constitutive of the limitation in itself, but rather frames it as the product of the interaction with the material, social, cultural, political and physical environment.

Almost always, what is seen as a disabling for individuals depends upon the physical and social arrangements as well as the institutional norms which can be altered (Goering, 2015; Nussbaum, 2011; Van Aswegen & Shevlin, 2019; Van Dongen et al., 2017). In 2017, I asserted that the traditional chalkboard method of instruction utilised

in rural Guyana for children with visual and auditory impairments, without utilising assistive technology, is disabling for these children. In the same way stair access without ramps or lifts in mainstream schools are hindrances to children with physical impairments. Moreover, the negative conceptions of impairment by mainstream teachers are also a disadvantage for children with SEND. If, as I have argued, disability is a social construct, then it can be changed to make the social and physical adjustments to meet the needs of individuals with impairments and the mainstream school system could be adjusted to accommodate all children. The social model of disability provides the platform to change the negative social constructions of disability.

Individuals, especially children who are categorised as having SEND because of impairments, suffer disablement in society and mainstream schools (Hutchinson, Roberts & Daly, 2018; Ramaahlo et al., 2018). Children suffer disablement in mainstream schools in postcolonial Guyana because the social and physical environment is disabling and, like Ceon, many children feel crucified by their experiences. Children's experiences might change if the social model could be applied. According to the social model, disability is an emergent property, created by the interplay between the biological reality of physiological impairment, structural conditioning (i.e. enablements/constraints), and socio-cultural interaction/elaboration. Thomas (2004) argues that the interplay of social relational conditioning and the absence of material resources produce the disability persons with impairments experience.

The social model has been applied in several countries including the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia for over thirty years (Levitt, 2017; Oliver, 2008, 2013; Owens, 2015; Redley, Pannebakker & Holland, 2018; Woods, 2017). However, it has not been applied consistently. Postcolonial Guyanese based its education system on the United Kingdom model. The model can also encompass the impacts of society on disability, for example, concerning how society's understanding of disability has a very considerable effect on the lives of disabled people (Levitt, 2017; Oliver, 2008, 2013).

I focus, here, on the practical application of the social model through my third research question. The social model of disability can be an efficient tool to improve people's lives (Oliver, 2008, 2013). This practical tool could make the experiences of children with SEND placed in mainstream schools in Guyana positive and meaningful. It seems

sensible, particularly when applying the social model to less affluent regions, to take into account not only societal barriers but also other social disadvantages, including poverty (Hemingway & Priestley, 2006; Levitt, 2017). The exclusion of individuals with impairments because their impairments are perceived negatively by society has caused many disabled persons to suffer poverty. Poverty can cause impairment and is, in itself, disabling.

Inclusive education systems do not exclude children with SEND (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, 2011; Dell'Anna, Pellegrini & Ianes, 2019; Loreman, 2009; Ramaahlo et al., 2018; UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017). Seeing disability as existing in the individual rather than in the society or education system has excluded many children from mainstream education in Guyana (Cheong et al. 2018; Fraser 2014; Lashley 2017). This form of exclusion creates the need for the application of the social model of disability in Guyana's education system. Social conceptions, beliefs and practices create the many challenges these children face rather than and as well as their impairment (Dell'Anna, Pellegrini & Ianes, 2019; Levitt, 2017; Owens, 2015; Robinson & Goodey, 2018). As emphasised in chapter one, in many communities across the world, people with impairments, especially children, face discrimination and marginalisation in school and society (see Ainscow, 2010; Andrews & Frankel, 2010; Singal, 2016 & Tomlinson, 2017).

As I mentioned above, the social model of disability contests discrimination and marginalisation, through civil rights and political activism and enabling disabled people to claim their rightful place in society (Dell'Anna et al, 2019; Oliver, 1990, 2008, 2013; Owens, 2015). It is clear that children with SEND in Guyana are guaranteed an equal educational access and opportunities by law (Education Act - Cap 39:01 & Persons with Disabilities Act 2010 - Cap 36:05). However, the traditional cultures and practices have disabled children with impairments and generated multiple barriers, challenges and disabling conditions, which seem to nullify this legal right. The Guyana People with Disability Society, the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme, the Deaf Association Guyana and the Guyana Society for the Blind among others have been advocating for the adoption of a more social model of disability and a change in the conception of impairment in Guyanese society.



Since Guyana has not yet developed an official definition of disability, this poses a challenge to the application of the social model that emphasises the distinct difference between disability and impairment. The way forward could be to define disability according to the principles of the social model of disability. As mentioned earlier, the impairment suffered could be a means to open up, deconstruct and transform access to the mainstream education system because children with SEND deserve full and direct participation in mainstream schools (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, 2011; Loreman, 2009).

Traditional conceptions, structures and practices in Guyana disadvantage children with impairments (Chouinard, 2012, 2015). By extension, it is through mainstream schools that some barriers, challenges and other forms of disablement, which diminish children's experience, are upheld. Moreover, some of the most explicit exclusion processes on the grounds of disability are taking place in schools and employment (Calderón-Almendros, 2018; Goering, 2015; Shakespeare, 2013).

The distinction between impairment and disability suggests that impairment in a child need not prevent full participation in mainstream education and the wider society. When the systems and programmes in mainstream schools limit that child's access and participation, a disability is being 'socially' constructed. Using the social model of disability, policy makers and those who translate policy into practice have the potential to remove some, if not all, of the socially constructed barriers, which create the discriminatory experiences of children with SEND. In practice, some institutions have continued with conventional '*care*' policies or have done little to implement policies in line with social model thinking on dismantling social and environmental barriers (Barnes & Mercer, 2004; GLAD 2000; Ramaahlo et al., 2018; Thomas, 2002). This also reflects the situation in Guyana.

According to the principles of the social model of disability, impairment may also become disability through the experience of structural oppression such as cultural stereotyping, attitudes, bureaucratic hierarchies, institutional inequalities and discrimination, market mechanisms, and other structural and organisational aspects of society (Owens, 2015; Ramaahlo et al., 2018; Thomas 2010). Disabled children could occupy the same spaces as individuals who are considered non-disabled, spaces in which we encounter each other as equal citizen (Oliver, 2009; Owens, 2015). While I was conducting fieldwork, there were several reports on state media of persons with

impairments being locked away in separate rooms and, in some cases, cages, by their family members<sup>1</sup>. Disabled people are regularly denied their human rights since policies and laws are hard to translate into practice (Ramaahlo, et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2017; UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017; UNICEF, 2019). This denial of human rights in practice is what Jane Kenway referred to as ‘the curious gap between hope and happening’ in relation to gender/sex, equality policies and social justice (Kenway, Willis, Blackmore & Rennie, 1997 p. 161). Disability is not a simple dichotomy, and there is a strong relationship between disability, social practices, and impairment (Ramaahlo, et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2017). Therefore, I would argue that society and mainstream education practitioners need to understand these close relationships and their impacts on the experiences and feelings about experiences of children with SEND, so that children with impairments are not disabled in mainstream schools.

As stated earlier, the proponents of the social model of disability suggests that disability is shaped by society’s failure to remove social, cultural, religious, economic, and environmental barriers (Aragon, 2013; as cited in Levitt, 2017; Donaldson et al., 2017). For Guyana, a necessary starting point could be the removal of embedded cultural stereotypes, which perceive children with impairments as unsuitable for mainstream schools. Disability is the interaction between several factors including features of a person’s body and elements of the society in which they live (Levitt, 2017; Reynolds & Kiuppis, 2018; Thomas, & Branscombe, 2017). For children with SEND placed in mainstream schools, disability is contingent upon the interactions of several factors. Once this has been acknowledged, efforts could be made to remove structural discrimination and inequalities which contribute to a significant proportion of the disability experienced by individuals with impairments (Reynolds & Kiuppis, 2018; Thomas, & Branscombe, 2017). The social model of disability has been usefully articulated in two frameworks to support changes in educational practice. These are Booth and Ainscow’s (2002, 2011) *Index for Inclusion* and Loreman's (2009) *Evaluative Tool*. The features of Booth and Ainscow’s (2002, 2011) *Index* are:

- Putting inclusive values into action.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2018/news/guyana/05/19/youth-kept-for-years-in-sophia-pig-pen-rescued/>.

- Viewing every life and every death as of equal worth.
- Supporting everyone to feel that they belong.
- Increasing participation for children and adults in learning and teaching activities, relationships and communities of local schools.
- Reducing exclusion, discrimination, barriers to learning and participation.
- Restructuring cultures, policies and practices to respond to diversity in ways that value everyone equally.
- Linking education to local and global realities.
- Learning from the reduction of barriers for some children to benefit children more widely.
- Viewing differences between children and adults as resources for learning.
- Acknowledging the right of children to high quality education in their locality.
- Improving schools for staff and parents/carers as well as children.
- Emphasising the development of school communities and values, as well as achievements.
- Fostering mutually sustainable relationships between schools and the surrounding communities.
- Recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society (CSIE, 2002; Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.3).

The main features of Loreman's (2009) work are reflected in the synthesis of the features of his evaluative tool. The synthesised features are:

- All children attend their neighbourhood school. Schools and districts have a '*zero-rejection*' policy when it comes to registering and teaching children in their region.
- All children are welcomed and valued.
- All children learn in regular, heterogeneous classrooms with same-age peers.

- All children follow substantively similar programmes of study, with a curriculum that can be adapted and modified if needed.
- Modes of instruction are varied and responsive to the needs of all.
- All children contribute to regular school and classroom learning activities and events.
- All children are supported to make friends and to be socially successful with their peers.

Adequate resources and staff training are provided within the school and district to support inclusion (Loreman, 2009, p. 43).

Loreman's features of inclusive education and Booth and Ainscow's *Index* are flexible tools. The *Index* has been adapted for use in many other countries and translated into thirty-seven languages (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, 2011; Booth & Black-Hawkins, 2005; CSIE, 2002). Loreman's social model of disability framework is rendered useless and irrelevant unless it is contextualised to local educational practice, context, culture, and circumstance (Forlin et al., 2013 & Loreman, 2009). As was discussed earlier, Hemingway and Priestley (2006) and Levitt (2017) indicated that it is practical to contextualise the social model of disability when applying it in any region. Loreman considers the material and social elements (barriers and disadvantages) of the society and institution where his features of inclusive education are applied. Ignoring the social elements, processes and resources within the society and its institutions renders the framework ineffective. The features of inclusive education also aim to make the education system more equitably accessed by all children. Making the system easily accessed starts with contextualising the framework to local educational practice, context, culture, and circumstance. Contextualising will indicate the opportunities to implement the features of inclusive education, challenges its application may face and bridge the gap between hope and actual practises in the mainstream education system. It has been contextualised for use and modified in twenty-two countries (Forlin et al., 2013; Loreman, 2009). For this study, I also explored whether Loreman's (2009) and Booth and Ainscow's (2002, 2011) school-based social model frameworks could be adapted contextually for use more widely across Guyana, to support schools to make a positive difference to the experience of children with SEND.

## 2.2 The Poststructuralist Perspective on Disability

*I am a disability somebody; I am nobody; I can do nothing good. The teachers say it, and I believe it.*

(Sabrina, July 2018, Interview)

While I embrace the social model of disability, I see the social and medical model of disability as two sides of a discourse on impairment and disability. As stated in section 2.1, my theoretical approach to disability draws on the social model of disability. However, the social model is inadequate to provide a sufficiently nuanced response to some of the data I have collected in terms of the micro-processes of schooling and the discursive framing of the unsuitability of children with impairments for mainstream schools in Guyana. The social model of disability does not perceive Sabrina as someone with a disability but rather sees her being disabled as a product of lack of material support in society but this is not the situation in Guyana.

In my first and second research questions (see section 1.52), I indicated that I set out to understand the experiences of children with SEND through learning about their experiences and feelings concerning mainstream schooling from what they say and do. There are more than social barriers, disadvantages and absence material support reflected in what Sabrina said and her actions which followed. There are influences of discourses and discursive practices which contribute to her embodied feelings of being subjugated imbued in her expressions that cannot be interpreted using only the social model of disability. Being subjugated frames how Sabrina perceives and believes herself to be no good because of impairment. To fully understand Sabrina's subjugated feelings, I needed to understand the discourses which framed her subjugation and embodied feelings.

According to Marks (1999) "Disability is the complex relationship between the environment, body and psyche, which serves to exclude certain people from becoming full participants in interpersonal, social, cultural, economic and political affairs" (p. 611). Marks' (1999) definition of disability suggested that disability does not reside either in the body or society but rather in an embodied relationship which can be perceived as discourses. I had to go beyond the confines of the social model of

disability to understand the discourses influencing her feelings and experiences that are not related to the absence of material resources. I needed to understand the embodied relationship which can be perceived through discourses. For this, I embraced poststructuralist theory which postulates that we are all largely constituted by the discourses and discursive practices within which we live and work. This includes children with impairments like Sabrina. Poststructuralism is better placed to complete my theory toolbox to analyse and interpret the experiences and expressions of the children with SEND.

Poststructuralist theory perceives society as being shaped by the discourses, discursive frameworks and fields, which includes not only dominant but also subordinated discourses. And, as I mentioned in section 1.4, the Guyanese people are investing themselves in the discourses on disabilities between social agencies (schools, parents, Parent Teacher Association, churches, markets places, recreational centres, hospitals, street corners, shops, bus stops etc) in the areas surrounding the schools. Through these discourses and discursive positions children with impairments are portrayed as unsuitable for mainstream schools. Children with SEND like Sabrina are influenced by the discourses around them to believe that it is their impaired bodies which cause the discrimination and marginalisation and not the absence of material resources and support in the school or areas surrounding the school. There is also the presence of resistance from children with SEND to the discourses and discursive positions which disable them, portraying them as unsuitable for mainstream schools. The resistance can be seen as a form power described by Foucault (1972). Power is reflected in the ways in which children with SEND take up (or reject) certain discursive positions on their experiences. I relied on the poststructuralist approach to understand and reflect these resistances and enveloping discourses.

I also selected poststructuralism because it explores how the very impairments themselves have been constituted discursively and not only materially. That does not necessarily mean contesting the existence of an illness or a difference. It means contesting the discourses that frame the difference that the difference will make. Poststructuralism allows me to achieve the understanding I seek through the first two research questions that could be limited if I narrow my frame of analysis only through the social model of disability. Poststructuralism allows me to understand the elements and conditions which frame the experiences of children with SEND. Poststructuralist

theory offers ways of identifying discourses and discursive practices, which produce the marginalisation of and discrimination against people with impairments. Poststructuralism helps me to understand the interplay of discourses in Guyana and participate in the discourses which contest the individual deficit model of disability, with its embedded policies and practices that frame the participation and experiences of children with impairments in the area studied.

As I mentioned above (p. 50), I have also conceptualised the experiences and socialisation of children with SEND through a poststructuralist lens to understand their experiences. I recognise the interconnected social relations formed discursively which influence the experiences and feelings of the children with SEND like Sabrina. To support me as I try to understand the discourses, discursive fields and discursive practices influencing social relations in the schools, I embraced Foucault's understanding of the 'discursive field' as an important element to understand the relationship between language, social institutions, subjectivity and power. Discursive fields include law, the family, and institutions. Discursive fields contain a number of competing and contradictory discourses with varying degrees of power to give meaning to and organise social institutions and processes. It is the competing and contradictory discourses that are active in the two schools studied that I also needed to recognise and analyse to acquire a deeper understanding about the children's experiences and feelings from what they tell me and from what I observed as I participated in daily school experiences.

According to Allan (2010), Harwood and Murray (2019) and Whitburn (2016), experiences and discourses are subjective (see Section 3.10, Embracing Subjectivity) and it is necessary to engage with them within the social sphere in which they are established. We are all caught in discourse, and our subjectivity is constituted by these (Allan, 2010; Amsterdam et al., 2015; Harwood & Murray, 2019; Parkes et al., 2010; Whitburn, 2016). Through a poststructuralist lens, I reflect the subjectivities offered by the discourses that influence children with SEND experiences. These experiences are subjective because of they are experienced and understood internally. Further, there are continuous subjective variations in the teachers' actions which influence the children's experiences and socialisation. It is through discourse that meanings, subjects, and subjectivities are formed (Besley, 2015; Harwood & Murray, 2019; Rose, 1998). Since I participated in local discourses during field work, my subjectivity influenced and was

influenced by them. This means I participated in the discourses by being embedded in the two schools and could not give a neutral reflection of the discourses (González Rey, 2018; Harwood & Murray, 2019; Laclau 1995 as cited in Rasiński, 2011; Parkes et al., 2010). In discussing the experiences of children with SEND in Guyana, I thus helped to shape a poststructuralist discourse and social model of disability meanings understood from the experiences.

Also, poststructuralists recognise that analysis takes place at the level of the category according to which the subject is identified so that the individuals concerned voice their own experiences of that categorisation (Besley, 2015; Hodgson & Standish, 2009). Analysing the experiences of the children with SEND could not be done solely using the social model of disability. The social model of disability analyses emphasise the experiences from the point in the environment from which the children are disabled. Analysing mainly from the point of becoming disabled could not truly reflect the experiences of the children with SEND who participated. Further, poststructuralism allows me to target the moment of slippage, within our systems of meanings, within our subjective spaces, as a way to understand discourses, discursive fields, and practices. Poststructuralism concentrates on the moment, when we formulate meaning in an area that contests previously shared social agreement (Allan, 2010; Amsterdam et al., 2015; Harcourt, 2007; Parkes et al., 2010; Whitburn, 2016).

Further, poststructuralism rejects “the claims of totality and universality and the presumption of binary structural oppositions” (Butler 1990, p.40). Poststructuralists endeavour to explain how we develop beliefs, facilitate ethical choices, and fill apparent voids in our knowledge, the resulting distributive implications in society, and the discourse on the subject (Harcourt, 2007). In this study, the moments of perceived differences between children with SEND’s expressions about their experiences are seen as critical to understanding their lived experiences, and the moments of perceived differences between expressions and experiences is a crucial emphasis of poststructuralism. According to Foucault (1977), the children’s representations of their experiences have power, even in a subjugated state, and are objects of knowledge for discourse. When I applied Foucault’s proposition to my study it means that the children with SEND’s expressions about their experiences have power to change their experiences and influence a different discourse (see section 2.5 - The power



relationship at play in mainstream schools in postcolonial Guyana) even when those expressions are dominated by another expression about the same experiences.

Poststructuralism is premised and developed, on the assumption that meanings are derived from relations of subconscious differences, which form a structure; it accentuates the voids and subjectivities in the composition of meanings (Harcourt, 2007). For Foucault, the interrogation needs to focus on: “how is it that the human subject turns himself into an object of possible knowledge, through what forms of rationality? Under what historical conditions? And finally, at what price?” (Foucault 1983:442). Using a Foucauldian inquiry approach, I needed to focus on the question, ‘How is it that any interpretation becomes convincing and at what price?’ This question reactivated my thinking about the ambiguities and subjectivities that might influence my interpretation of the experiences of the children with SEND (see above, p. 55). Also, Foucault was interested in how the process of making a discourse ‘true’ shapes the way we, as subjects, judge, think, categorise and desire the other. Like Foucault (1983b), I am interested in how it is that we, as researchers, turn ourselves into objects of study. Becoming an object of study in my research became more apparent when parents made me their unit of analysis during the fieldwork.

Poststructuralists, especially Foucauldians, believe that to know reality is to participate in it (Dillet, 2017; Geuss, 1981) and this is reflective of my beliefs, about understanding the reality of the lived experiences of children with SEND in Guyana. Also, like other Foucauldian poststructuralists, I am re-emphasising that I believe that knowledge, meaning, identities and social realities are constructed through discourse (Foucault, 1978). All such constructions can be reconstructed and reconstituted in multiple identities; the subjects are inscribed directly or indirectly to manoeuvre the realities in the social spheres (Foucault, 1978; Hodgson & Standish, 2009; Rømer, 2020). Following the principles of poststructuralism, I am aware that the experiences children with SEND and their mainstream teachers shared will be shaped within and from discourses. They are discursive data and thus are evidence of those discourses – in this study, confirmation of the placement experiences of children with SEND in two mainstream schools in Guyana.

## 2.3 The Individual Deficit Model of Disability

*I am disabled because I am a sin, and my father is disappointed. I cannot even read the holy book in the temple.*

(Prem, September 2018, Interview)

'Individuals who could not be included in the category of ability identified in terms of productivity became identified as dis-abled people' (Terzi, 2004 p. 144). Being identified as 'dis-abled people' implies that disability is a personal deficit in need of medical intervention (Terzi, 2004). This personal deficit view suggests that disabled people themselves are the source of the problem, which over the years has had negative connotations (Bunbury, 2019). These negative connotations have strengthened the dominance of the individual deficit model of disability in Guyana, which helps to create the experiences of children like Prem. The individual deficit model of disability has dominated the public's perception of disability across the world despite the introduction of the social model of disability (Braathen, Munthali & Grut, 2015; Bracken & Thomas, 2001; Haegele & Hodgeb, 2016; Rees, 2018). It is through its dominance that individuals with impairment are oppressed (Finkelstein & French 1993; Harpur 2012; Shakespeare 2014; Shakespeare et al, 2009).

The individual deficit model of disability argues that physical or mental defects are inherently abnormal and pathological, and that this requires intervention or cure with the aim of ameliorating the condition to the greatest extent possible (Braathen et al, 2015; Bracken & Thomas, 2001; Bunbury, 2019; Haegele & Hodgeb, 2016; Rees, 2018; Terzi, 2004). Central to the individual deficit model of disability is thus a focus on the impairment itself (Braathen et al, 2015). It offers an individualistic perspective of disability which refers to individual (mis)characteristics of the body, something missing in the individual: a limb, an organ or a mechanism in the body (Finkelstein & French 1993; Harpur 2012; Shakespeare 2014; Shakespeare et al, 2009; Terzi, 2004).

One of the major limitations of the individual deficit model is its primary focus on medical conditions while ignoring social and environmental issues that contribute to disability and social exclusion (Shakespeare 2014; Shakespeare, et al, 2009) as well as neglecting the issues of culture and context which also contribute to disability and

social exclusion (Meekosha 2011; Meekosha & Soldatic 2011). This neglect of culture and context is evident in forms of the individual deficit model that were primarily developed and implemented in the Global North, and which contribute to the oppression, discrimination and marginalisation of people with disabilities in the Global South (Meekosha 2011; Meekosha & Soldatic 2011). From this point of view, the problems, challenges or barriers encountered by individuals with disabilities are independent of more extensive socio-cultural, physical, or political environments. This biomedical construction of impairment (presumed individual deficiency) is also blended with harmful constructions suggesting the disabled lack the ability to participate in ‘normal’ life (Bunbury, 2019; Smith-Carrier et al., 2017).

Disability is conceptualised as a biological product in the individual deficit model of disability discourse (Barton, 2009; Haegele & Hodgeb, 2016). There is no distinction between disability and impairment (Bingham et al., 2013; Blustein, 2012; Brittain, 2004; Haegele & Hodgeb, 2016; Palmer & Harley, 2012). They share an interrelated relationship in the individual deficit model of disability (Bingham et al., 2013; Forhan, 2009; Mitra, 2006; Palmer & Harley, 2012; Roush & Sharby, 2011). There needs to be a distinction so that teachers understand what they can do in the learning environment to help children with SEND overcome social barriers.

## **2.4 Inclusive Education in the global South**

*My child cannot have SEND or whatever you are calling it. She does not have a disability. Here you go again with this disability and special needs thing.*

(Elbert, parent, 2018)

Inclusive education in the global South is neither conceptualised nor contextualised the same way as in the global North (Franck & Joshi, 2017; Kamenopoulou, 2018; Meekosha, 2008, 2011). It is a concept created in global North, which can acquire different meanings in global South contexts (Franck & Joshi, 2017; Kamenopoulou, 2018; Meekosha, 2008, 2011). It carries colonising connotations (Damiani et al., 2016). By colonising connotations, I mean it establishes dependence on the global North to determine, guide and support inclusive education policies and practices in the global South. Moreover, there is a reality of different contextual constraints and possibilities,

including historical, cultural, socioeconomic, political and socio-cultural factors that influence educational inclusion and exclusion (Grech, 2014; Opini, 2016; Walton, 2014). The greatest challenge for inclusive education and '*Education for All*' lies in the rural areas of the global South (Franck & Joshi, 2017). In Guyana, for example, some parents like Elbert do not accept that their child's need for help could be because of SEND because of its negative connotations.

Another significant challenge for inclusive education in Guyana is the negative attitude towards and conceptions of SEND that originated in historically segregated practices. These attitudes and conceptions suggest that children with impairments are incapable and unsuitable for mainstream schools and this reflects common exclusion practices in mainstream schools (Fraser, 2014; Lashley, 2017). Children have not been asked (not by policy makers and probably not often by teachers) what they want from inclusive education or even if they want it. Disabled children's perspectives are ignored, which contributes to their marginalisation in society (Wickenden & Kembhavi-Tam, 2014). Inclusive education policies are usually non-existent or are adopted from global North political and cultural contexts with limited contextualisation, which further contributes to the marginalisation of children with SEND (Kamenopoulou, 2018; Meekosha, 2011; Miles & Singal, 2010; Robertson et al., 2012).

In many parts of the world, (like Colombia and Brazil, which share the same global position and a similar context to Guyana), the individual deficit model of disability is still applied. Support teachers are only hired to support pupils with impairments and learning difficulties if a diagnosis has been issued by the health services (Kamenopoulou, 2018). Directly linking all impairments as requiring medical diagnosis and intervention is one of the cultural practices evident in Guyana. Another variable of interest here is poverty. Poverty not only causes or increases impairment but also disables people with impairments and illnesses from participating in aspects of community life in Guyana (Chouinard, 2015). Poverty also affects children with SEND placed in mainstream schools (see chapters five, six and eight). While educationalists in the North recognise in theory that poverty and social disadvantage can lead to SEND, in many cases, SEND is instituted by other social disadvantages, racism, displacement or colonial heritage as is discussed in chapters five to seven.

The social milieu of mainstream schooling can affect children with SEND's psychosocial development and identity formation (Vlachou & Papananou, 2015). Many children with SEND struggle to deal with the personal dilemmas of differences and the psycho-social approaches to impairment embraced in some mainstream schools (Blackman, 2019; Gayle-Geddes, 2016; Vlachou & Papananou, 2015). Children with SEND struggle to deal with the personal dilemmas because the social environment, including social relations, culture and ethos, attitudes and behaviours within mainstream education and society in Guyana has excluded children with impairments from the social environment (Chouinard, 2012, 2015). Some children with SEND constantly deal with mainstream teachers' low expectations, indifference and prejudiced attitudes, stereotypical assumptions and actions, as well as social and educational marginalisation (Vlachou & Papananou, 2015). Children with SEND also experience some form of victimisation, including being subjected to direct and brutal forms of hostility such as bullying (Naraian, 2013, 2016; Vlachou & Papananou, 2015).

In many cases, the structural design of the school premises in Guyana and the Caribbean more widely creates a significant access barrier for children with physical impairments (Blackman, 2019; Caribbean Development Bank, 2016, 2018; Chouinard, 2012; Gayle-Geddes, 2016). The challenges and barriers children with SEND face daily in the Caribbean continue to grow (Blackman, 2011, 2019). Lack of access and limited resources coupled with a lack of adaptation of curriculum content, teaching strategies and pedagogical material, restricts the education of children with SEND even further (Vlachou & Papananou, 2015). In addition, it is important to recognise that what disabled children have to say about their educational experiences helps to provide more useful insights into the situation (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008).

Social relations with peers and staff are of paramount importance to the experiences of children with SEND in mainstream schools (Vlachou & Papananou, 2015). The meanings that pupils convey when they speak about their teachers transcend the functional aspects of teaching (Blackman, 2011, 2019). They also describe the social milieu of the classroom and the effects of teachers' characteristics embedded in the discourses and interactions in the school (Blackman, 2011, 2019). There is a social and cultural milieu in the mainstream classrooms of Guyana, which has never been discussed using the voices of children with SEND to better frame the situation as it is experienced by them. Children with SEND voices and experiences need to be

considered when thinking about SEND and inclusive education (Opini, 2016; Sensoy 2009).

Global policy discourse on inclusion continues to champion outcomes that are distant and unworkable in Southern contexts because of the socioeconomic and sociocultural differences (Meekosha, 2008, 2011; Urwick & Elliott, 2010). Naraian (2016) argues that these produce varied experiences between the global North and South and, therefore, it is necessary to revisit and reconsider the theoretical foundations of inclusive education and make theories global South specific. In the global South, some schooling practices have marked people with impairments as tragic, undesirable and incompetent (Gallagher 2004). Naraian suggests further that teachers need to understand (dis)ability not as located within the child, but as inherent in the social practices which construct a student as '*different*'. Social constructionist thinking could, she says, help the global South shape its inclusion frameworks more effectively. Therefore, teachers in the global South need to start thinking of contextualised solutions in their classroom rather than waiting for the imposition of global North theories (Naraian, 2013, 2016).

Cultural differences undermine efforts to promote social inclusion and increase the marginalisation of disabled people (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Barnes 2012; Memari & Hafizi, 2015). Marginalisation through cultural difference is due to the fact that cultural differences hinder efforts to encourage the placement and social inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream schools in Guyana (chapter five). There are barriers to participation in daily life for disabled people, and these barriers are not caused by their impairments, but by an environment that does not take into account their rights, diversities or abilities (Memari & Hafizi, 2015). A cultural–social model of disability could provide more effective solutions for disability in the global South (Devlieger, 2005; Memari & Hafizi, 2015; Parmenter, 2008). Policies for inclusion need to take violence and abuse experienced by disabled children in schools into consideration (Beutel, Tangen & Carrington, 2019; Chouinard, 2012; Fraser, 2014). It could create and exacerbate disabilities (See chapter five).

## **2.5 The power relationship in play in two mainstream schools in postcolonial Guyana**

*Disabled children do not belong here. They are always weak and spoiling things. Please send them to a disabled people's school.*

(Thomas - a child without SEND, Interview, 2018)

The demonstrations of power in the discourses in which Thomas is inscribed have influenced his feelings that the placement of children with SEND threatened his power within the mainstream school, and he needed to exert force to suppress those who threatened his power. With regards to this, power can be seen to be omnipresent and immanent in social relationships (Foucault, 1980; Selchow, 2017). This can be framed in the way the government's power influenced the placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools in Guyana while social institutions' power resisted the placement. The influence of power in mainstream schools also changes the dynamics because of the competing discourses on SEND. As such, new interplays of power in social relationships results in changes of discourses and practices to obtain power (Foucault, 1980; Selchow, 2017).

Most education systems in the world are insensible and inflexible to diversity (Qu, 2015; Robinson, 2013) and, as a result, some teachers reflect the systems' biases towards children with SEND. When some teachers were asked in a survey in Guyana by UNICEF in 2019, why they behaved the way they do towards teaching children with SEND, their summarised responses were essentially that it had always been this way. Society and the mainstream education hierarchy expect it to be this way. When asked 'who says society expects it?' they indicated that they were just aware that it was the expected norm, a form of commonsense understanding. The teachers were also asked 'who or what in society enforces the compliance to these unspoken expected norms and commonsense understanding'. They indicated that it was a feeling they perceived from multiple sections of society. It is expressed through religious organisations, in the marketplace and discursive practices in the community and the administrative bodies in mainstream schools. The teachers' views reflect Foucault's (1977) mechanism of objectification which is discussed in the next paragraph.

The concept of biopower, according to Cisney & Morar (2015) and Foucault (1977), describes the many avenues through which power exerts itself routinely in the typical

and mundane activities within a social system. Individuals engage in self-surveillance and self-discipline, and, thereby, subjugate themselves to the power manifesting in society. This power is not forced upon the individuals through a dominating body (Cisney & Morar, 2015; Foucault, 1977) but rather individuals are implicated in their oppression as they participate in routine daily practices (Cisney & Morar, 2015; Foucault, 1977, 1980). In a similar way, Guyanese mainstream teachers engage in self-surveillance and self-discipline and implicate themselves to function in mainstream schools providing opportunities, experiences and socialisation for the general population of children without SEND, which oppresses children with SEND and themselves.

UNICEF (2019) stated that Guyanese society also expects teachers to reflect its culture and practise it within the mainstream schools. In addition, the recognition the teachers receive from society when they conform to society's regulation and expectations is a form of power in itself. In contrast, they are rejected if they do not conform to cultural expectations. Teachers may readily be considered bad cultural influences in some areas in Guyana if they try to change existing discourses by transcending historic beliefs and practices like the conception of SEND. It does not matter if these traditions are discriminatory and develop barriers to educational access for some children. From this perspective, schools are not expected to adapt for children, but children are expected to adapt to the school's environs and expectations. Schools expecting children to adapt to the schools with reasonable adjustments resonates with Terzi's (2010) comments that we are moving rapidly away from the idea of education as an intrinsic good. I say it resonates with Terzi's (2010) comments because when schools do not adapt for children they reduce if not eliminate the feeling that school is a good place for children with SEND. For example, mainstream school placement in states in America seems to be a privilege not a right for children with SEND, which is inflexible and insensitive (Robinson, 2013). Similar practices are evident in Guyana.

According to Guyana's government, the education system is transforming with the intent of becoming inclusive for all children (Ministry of Education, Guyana, 2018). Mainstream teachers and children are experiencing a new form of power influence from the government. This new form of power could be vigorously active because it appeals to the desires through social discourses, practices and social relationships (Foucault 1980b:59). Moreover, it could result in changing networks of social relationships for



children in the mainstream primary schools with the placement of children with SEND. Through this change, children with SEND could be empowered, and barriers to experiences and socialisation minimised if not removed. This does not appear to be the case at the present time. The placement has established a new diversity of the population of children which have not been adequately accommodated in mainstream schools because of a lack of resources. The diversity of SEND can only be fully met with a diversity of educational provisions (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011; Qu, 2015; Robinson, 2013).

## **2.6 Normalisation for children with SEND in the Guyanese mainstream education system**

*Everything is sin or disrespectful. Teachers are always right, and children need to know their places. Some people are better than others, things are just not equal. My parents taught me to accept everyone for who they are. Why can teachers here not accept children for who they are?*

(Joel, 2018 – Conversation after Cricket Practice)

The power influencing society frames the collective desire of what constitutes a good life and happiness (Chapman & Adams, 2002; Foucault, 1977; Mallon, 2017; Wolfensberger, 1972). In this view, happiness can be created as a multidimensional structure that includes the meaning of life, positive feelings, responsibility, positive relationships and success (Sezer & Can, 2018; Seligman, 2011). Children with SEND deserve happiness in a mainstream school, but as Joel explained, which is supported by Blackman et al, (2019), inequalities in school and society change the dynamics of power through institutional inequalities and discrimination and, as a result, children with SEND are often unhappy in mainstream schools. Therefore, their placement in mainstream schools does not equate to inclusion (Blackman et al, 2019). There is too much focus on their limitations and inabilities and not the discursive practices needed for effective placement. Inclusion is influenced by the physical environment, attitudes, expectations and opportunities, in addition to a child's skills and abilities (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, 2011; Loreman, 2009). As such, schools need to focus on the

environment and teachers' practices, rather than on what an individual child can or cannot do (Maciver et al., 2018).

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, happiness for children with SEND needs to be a normalised experience. School happiness can be framed as emotional well-being, which is the result of harmony between the school's expectation and personal needs of student through certain environmental factors (Blackman et al, 2019; Engels et al., 2004 as cited in Sezer & Can, 2018). Moreover, a happy school environment is essential to bringing out the students' talents and effective learning (Talebzadeh & Samkan, 2011, as cited in Sezer & Can, 2018). In the schools I did my fieldwork, children with SEND seem not yet to have experienced this form of happiness (see chapters five–seven). Bird and Markle (2012, cited in Sezer & Can, 2018) also argue that happy school environments not only contribute to student's academic success but also improve other areas of life, such as healthy communication, lifelong success, and self-fulfilment. Aydın (2016, as cited in Sezer & Can, 2018), Booth & Ainscow (2002, 2011) & Loreman, (2009) emphasise that children need to be educated with great care, ensuring that they are valued.

All children need to be valued and feel valued (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, 2011; Dell'Anna et al, 2019; Loreman, 2009; Oliver, 2008, 2013; Owens, 2015; Ramaahlo, et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2017). Social Role Valorisation (SRV) involves role-valorising (Wolfensberger, 1983; Mallon, 2017). SRV is of paramount importance to children with SEND in mainstream education systems where they are already devalued or at the point of becoming devalued (Wolfensberger, 1980a, 1980b; Mallon, 2017). Children with SEND in this study were framed by society's discourses as having lower value within mainstream schools and believed that they are undeserving of a good life and happiness in mainstream schools.

There are two major ways of constituting social role valorisation for children with SEND (Wolfenberger, 1983; Mallon, 2017). The first is to enhance the social image of children with SEND within mainstream schools. Secondly, persistent efforts need to be made at reducing the barriers children with SEND face in mainstream schools (Wolfenberger, 1983; Mallon, 2017). Helping children with SEND to realise that they can experience mainstream schools like any other child could reduce the challenges both the teacher and children face (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, 2011; Calderón-

Almendros, 2018; Connell, 2017; Goering, 2015; Loreman, 2009; Shakespeare, 2013). The enhancing of the social roles of children with SEND can be created in four distinct domains, but the most important is the individual domain. The individual's primary social system is the family (Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983, 1984, 1988; Mallon, 2017). Exploring the other domains such as the intermediate level social systems of an individual or group, such as the neighbourhood, community, and services the person receives; the larger society of the individual or group, including the entire service system (Goering, 2015; Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983, 1984, 1988; Mallon, 2017) are also other avenues to be explored.

Through stimulating and rich experiences, children with SEND can be active agents in the mainstream education system and society (Ferguson et al., 2019; Wolfensberger, 1992, 1995b, 1996; Wolfensberger & Glenn, 1973). The Normalisation principle also means that the choices, wishes and desires of the children with SEND have to be taken into consideration, their voices revealed, and recognition and respect need to be given. Further, this Normalisation process of placing children with SEND in a mainstream education system requires concerted effort (Wolfensberger, 1992; 1995c, 1996; Wolfensberger & Glenn, 1973). The Normalisation principle also means an opportunity to undergo everyday developmental experiences within their education life cycle wherever the children with SEND are placed (Mallon, 2017; Wolfensberger, 1991a, 2011; Wolfensberger & Tullman, 1982).

Normalisation through social role valorising is significantly affected by teachers' depersonalising attitudes and gives rise to terrified children (see Chapter Six). Moreover, teachers' depersonalising attitudes were associated with activating negative emotions like helplessness and loneliness (Koenen et al., 2019). However, teachers could be playing a major role in enhancing the experiences of children with SEND but sometimes teachers have negative emotions which impair efforts at social role valorising for children with SEND. In relation to this, teachers' negative emotions have been found to impair teacher sensitivity in interactions with students (Stuhlman & Pianta, 2002, as cited in Koenen et al., 2019). This indirectly harms students' socioemotional and academic development (Becker et al., 2015; Keller, Frenzel, et al., 2014; Roorda, Koomen et al., 2011).

The social-constructivist perspective on teachers' emotions states that emotions are embedded and expressed in daily social interactions and relationships with specific others, including students (Split, Koomen, Thijs, 2011; Zembylas, 2007). As a result, students who have emotional or behavioural problems are likely to have overlapping problems across different areas of their health and development (Coombes et al. 2013; Gillberg, 2010; Minnis, 2013; Pritchetta et al., 2014). Teachers who score relatively low on tests of supportive teacher styles have lower quality interactions with students (Stroet, Opdenakker, Minnaert, 2013). Teachers need to be constantly socially valorising children with SEND to prevent overlapping problems highlighted above.

## **2.7 The placement of children with SEND in traditional mainstream education systems**

*My mother believed that because I have a physical handicap, I have a lesser value than my sister. My sister uses this to get her way in everything. I don't hate her for it. It is my mom, and the community who made her that way.*

(Joseph, October, 2018, Interview)

Joseph was deprived of an education because of his exceptionalities, which is a common global problem for such children (Ainscow, 2010; Barriga et al., 2017; Florian, 2012; Levin & Lockheed, 1993; UNESCO 2009; UNICEF, 2019). Children with SEND need support throughout their formal education, and, therefore, placement in an unsupportive mainstream education system is not a model that needs to be employed to cater for their diversities (Al Hout, 2017; Davis & Florian, 2004; UNESCO, 2017). In fact, reasonable adjustments could be made to the environment and programmes to cater for these diverse needs and resources could be provided to support all children (Al Hout, 2017; Booth & Ainscow, 2002, 2011; Davis & Florian, 2004; Loreman, 2009; UNESCO, 2017). If mainstream education for children with SEND is to be truly effective, then it is critical that all children are supported. In regard to this, inclusive assessment is very important since it informs teaching and learning, thereby allowing the school to modify and adapt learning experiences and develop an inclusive curriculum. It also plays a crucial role in identifying learning needs,

monitoring the efficacy of interventions and measuring progress (Al Hout, 2017; Booth & Ainscow, 2002, 2011; Loreman, 2009; UNESCO, 2017; Westwood, 2007).

The support needed for children in the mainstream education system needs to be gathered from the stakeholders in the education system (Al Hout, 2017; Barriga et al., 2017; Rose & Howley, 2007; UNESCO, 2017). Collaboration among stakeholders in the education system ensures that resources are not only provided but also that children with SEND receive all the support needed. Unfortunately, it is a gap between hope and happening. Fundamental to this support is providing the necessary emotional release when children with SEND feel overwhelmed in mainstream schools. It is also essential to be consistent and continuous with the support given to children with SEND in a mainstream education system as often as it is needed (Al Hout, 2017; Barriga et al., 2017; Rose & Howley, 2007).

Conceptions of social achievements, practical experiences, socialisation, academic success and failure, ability and disability are all contingent on society's discourse and discursive practices (Carrier, 1990; Karousou, 2017). They can be viewed as cultural constructions of society (Carrier, 1990; Karousou, 2017) since multiple sources in society contribute to the conception of the placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools. These multiple sources are powerful influences on the teachers, educators and schools involved in the placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools (Ainscow 2012; APPG, 2017; Gliedman et al., 1980).

Currently, the mainstream education system in Guyana was established to include only some children. This differentiation has meant that other children could not cope with mainstream education. Even now, with the placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools, the experiences and socialisation presented are still barriers to inclusion (Karousou, 2017; Vlachou, 1997). Teachers are apprehensive about the placement decisions contingent on the view that no relevant support is available. Any decision taken by members of society or the persons in education authority to place children with SEND in mainstream education without reasonable adjustments or support is a denial of equitable education opportunities. Such decisions about the education and placement of children with SEND are not the source of the marginalisation. The marginalisation is a general feature of ableism in the country. For example, children with SEND have been institutionalised, segregated, undereducated,

socially rejected, excluded and made unemployable for too long (Ballard, 1997; Biklen, 1988; Carrier, 1989; Rees, 2018; Tinson et al., 2016; UNICEF, 2013).

The proportion of the population that does not have impairments needs to interact with the minority who have impairments (Aiden & McCarthy, 2014; Nekby, Rödin & Özcan, 2009; Sugimura & Takeuchi, 2017). In addition, this same interaction could be transmitted from society to mainstream schools and from mainstream schools to society (Aiden & McCarthy, 2014; Nekby, Rödin & Özcan, 2009; Sugimura & Takeuchi, 2017). This is because children with SEND and children without impairments need the opportunity to interact, share learning experiences, discuss ideas, create knowledge, socialise and benefit from each other cognitively and socially. Participative interactions could be done in a conducive and healthy atmosphere and not under challenging circumstances that unsupported placements cause.

The principles of multicultural education advocate collaborative education and supportive learning structures and systems. Such an approach caters for the diversity among students in mainstream school. In light of advocating for multicultural education, it is important to recognise that mainstream education systems need support to facilitate collaborative education and supportive learning structures and systems. This could produce more genuine equality of educational opportunity in the supportive placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools (Ainscow, 2012; McCracken, 1993; Mittler 1994; Singal, 2016 & Tomlinson, 2017).

Numerous factors may compound the challenges all children face in mainstream educational settings, and these are likely to be institutional and personal factors. Some of these compounding factors include: school policy, the allocation of students to classes, the principals' and teachers' attitudes towards the placement of children with SEND, the quality of support offered by the special educator, the type of relationship between the regular and the special educator, and the teachers' level of confidence in organising appropriate learning experiences catering for the differences between children. There are also compounding factors which are external to the mainstream education system but are present in wider society (Fraser, 2014; Mitchell, 2005; Thomas, 1985).

The school which facilitates the placement of children with SEND could create the desire to be supportive of all children (Forlin, 2013a; Hofstede, 2001; Sergiovanni &

Starratt, 1988). If this common desire is constituted and reflected in the value systems, it could influence the norms and standards, which in turn will influence patterns of behaviour and how the placement is facilitated. Therefore, mainstream schools need to endeavour to eliminate ambiguities in practices and policies in relation to the placement of children with SEND and mainstream education managers need to convince themselves and others to adopt new practices that introduce changes in placement practices for children with SEND (Forlin, 2013a; Hofstede, 2001; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988; Skrtic, 1991; Weick, 1985).

The placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools without adequate provisions, adjustments or modification is not beneficial for children already in the mainstream schools, mainstream teachers or children with SEND (Aiden & McCarthy, 2014; Bakhshi, Kett & Oliver, 2013; Brouillette & Harris, 1993; Milner & Tenore, 2010; Sugimura & Takeuchi, 2017; Swanson & Vaughn, 2010). Guyana, like other poor to middle income countries, finds it challenging to provide resources, physical structure and learning support needed to cater for children with SEND (Ajodhia-Andrews, 2007; Andrews & Frankel, 2010; Groenewegen, 2004; Ministry of Education Guyana, 2018). It is estimated that providing educational services for children with SEND could cost 2 to 3 times more than offering education to children without SEND (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Soriano et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2017). The G\$ 41.9 billion budgetary allocation for education in 2018, was doubled in 2019. However, disappointingly, this did not constitute any significant additional provisions for children with SEND, placed in mainstream schools.

In general, the overall atmosphere of mainstream schools in developing countries in the global South is not inclusive enough for children with SEND (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; De Boer et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2017). The non-inclusive practices are due to the fact that there are systemic, structural, organisational and attitudinal barriers that continue to be antithetical to the philosophy and practice of inclusive education within the Caribbean and neighbouring regions (Blackman et al, 2019; Blackman et al, 2019; Caribbean Development Bank, 2016). I also observed that the non-inclusive practices resulted from what the government decides it is able to afford, the lack of expertise in the country and too much demand on teachers. Saints and Angel Primary School are embedded in and actively propagate the historical, systemic, structural,

organisational and attitudinal barriers that continue to be antithetical to the philosophy and practice of inclusive education within Guyana.

There are approximately one hundred and twenty thousand children (N=120,000) in mainstream primary schools in Guyana (Bureau of Statistics, Government of Guyana, 2018). According to the 2012 preliminary census report, there are approximately sixteen thousand and five hundred children (N=16500) with SEND. The Bureau of Statistics also reported that only 33 per cent of these children (N=5445) are served by the education system, whether in mainstream or special schools. As a result, approximately eleven thousand and fifty-five (N=11055) children with SEND are not catered for by the education system, whether in mainstream or special schools (Bureau of Statistics, Government of Guyana, 2018). These children are not provided with the necessary education experiences and opportunities because of historical, systemic, structural, organisational and attitudinal barriers that continue to be antithetical to the philosophy and practice of inclusive education within the social structure of Guyana.

Most of Guyana's mainstream primary school buildings lack basic structural access for children with physical disabilities (Cheong 2018; Fraser 2014; Lashley, 2017; Fraser 2014). The design of most of these buildings limits and restricts movements of wheelchairs and any other equipment that is used to aid mobility. In fact, traditional stairs are used to gain access to the upper floors and there are few ramps or lifts, if any. This basic traditional structure makes Guyana's mainstream primary schools unsuitable for children with physical impairments and limited mobility in most cases.

The barriers that continue to be antithetical to the philosophy and practice of inclusive education within Guyana discussed in the previous paragraph are also actively expressed in the hidden curriculum of mainstream schools. The hidden curriculum includes unspoken rules and customs, fashions or trends, and may change and evolve; critically, though, it is always implicit and unstated (Endow 2010; Moyse & Porter, 2015; Myles, Trautman & Schelvan 2013). The hidden curriculum appears to create difficulties for children with SEND (Moyse & Porter, 2015). The hidden curriculum in mainstream primary schools in Guyana also seems harsh and depersonalising for children and the discourses and discursive practices expressed in the hidden curriculum have distressing consequences for all children. Therefore, it seems fair to suggest that mainstream schools in Guyana (Andrews & Frankel, 2010; Cheong, 2018; Lashley,



2017) and the Caribbean (Blackman et al, 2019 & Caribbean Development Bank, 2016, 2018) have a long way to go in terms of being inclusive for children with SEND.

## **2.8 Inclusion or Integration?**

*These children with their disabilities cannot survive in our school. Why are they forced to be here? They don't even want to be here. They get on my nerves. I am always anxious around them. This is not good for any of us.*

(Thomas, October, 2018, Interview)

Whether by quasi inclusion or partial integration, mainstream schools have seen an increase in the number of students with impairments, who have diverse academic and social needs (Bemiller, 2019). Equality is not akin to equity. In classrooms where teachers lack adequate training, children with SEND may not experience equity, ultimately weakening the intent of inclusive practices (Bemiller, 2019; Malki & Einat, 2018). Simultaneously, with the increasing number of placements of children with SEND, there has been an increase in peer victimisation (Abdulsalam, Daihani & Francis, 2017; Nambiar, Jangam, Roopesh, & Bhaskar, 2019). Either way (inclusion/integration) children with SEND need equitable provision according to their individual needs. Children with SEND in Guyana lack basic provision and attitudes do not favour their placement in mainstream school as seen from the comments by children like Thomas as well as teachers.

Misleading, inclusion-focused, intemperately romanticised rhetoric regarding the education of disabled children in many nations is worrisome (Anastasiou et al., 2018). The placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools in Guyana is worrisome because it is too romanticised by the government. The government talks about the benefits without considering potential challenges for children with SEND placed in mainstream schools. After the euphoric talks end, there is limited support and are few resources following the blissful proclamation of inclusion by the government. The children are placed in mainstream schools with their hopes elevated but disappointed when they are marginalised, depersonalised and made to feel unsuitable for mainstream schools. The curious gap created between elevated hopes and unsupported placements is caused by the government romanticising their decision to placed children with

impairments in mainstream schools. This romanticised placement in the mainstream education system has not aligned special education with general education in a manner that would provide effective and efficient opportunities, experiences and socialisation to all children. This is what Guyana could be striving to achieve, with the G\$41.9 billion education budget for 2018, which was almost doubled in 2019. Instead, children with SEND are placed in mainstream schools, and they are expected to cope. As I show below, this is a dilemma that children with SEND faced in the two mainstream schools studied. They also face this dilemma because they are not seen as '*ideal school subjects*' (Link, Gallos, & Wortham, 2017) for mainstream schools.

Inclusion involves a serious commitment, and responsibility to restructure mainstream general educational institutions to cater for the diversity of all children within the catchment area of the mainstream institution (Ainscow, 2012; Ainscow et al., 2000; Booth & Ainscow, 1998; Booth et al., 2002; Swain et al., 2003). However, it is widely evident that children with SEND still face multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion which differ depending on the severity of the SEND, their area of residence and the culture or class to which they belong (Singal, 2016; UNICEF, 2013). Whether integration or inclusion, all children need to be allowed to attend their neighbourhood schools and mainstream schools could be friendly and accessible to all children.

The most significant barriers faced by children with SEND placed in mainstream schools are the negative beliefs and the negative power against inclusion from the traditionally non-inclusive society. Inclusion rather than integration can foster a change in outlook as it relates to the barriers that children/teachers perceive (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick, & West, 2011; Barriga et al., 2017). Through inclusion, many barriers present in the mainstream school could be overcome. In relation to this, when a school adopts an inclusive approach and reduces class sizes, more children could receive individualised experiences without teachers facing additional challenges (Ainscow 2010; Forlin, 2013a; UNESCO, 2017). Schools cannot adopt an inclusive approach and reduces class sizes to provide more individualised experiences to children without adequate funding.

The inclusive movement has primarily been a special education movement. Inclusion solely focused on special education has shaped society's belief that the focus is mainly on children with impairments. In the schools I studied, parents and other stakeholders in

the communities felt that it compromises the educational opportunities of the average population of children in mainstream schools. One way in which inclusion can meet the needs of children with SEND is by recognising the diversities within the classroom and differentiating modes of instruction to meet the needs of all children (Inclusion BC, 2017; Shaddock et al., 2009; Spratt & Florian, 2014).

All children are confronted with issues arising from gender, behaviour, socioeconomic status, race, language and culture. Integration and inclusion could be achieved by expanding mainstream thinking, structures, and practices so that all students are accommodated. Mainstream schools whether by inclusion or integration could make functional changes so that all children, regardless of their background or ability, can succeed (Inclusion BC, 2017; Rouse & Florian, 2012; Stough, 2003; Winter & O’Raw, 2010).

## **2.9 SEND provisions in Guyana and the law**

*I know these stakeholders and policymakers are aware of the experiences of children with SEND in mainstream schools. They have not done anything significant to challenge the negativity of the experiences of the children nor helped the thinking of mainstream teachers.*

(Mr Mitchel, Teacher, Conversation during classroom observation 2018.)

Guyana is a founding member state of Caricom and is bound by its treaties and accords (regional laws and declarations) in addition to her national State laws which are discussed in subsequent paragraphs. The treaty, which relates to the provisions for persons with disabilities is the Declaration of Pétion Ville of 2013, reiterates the expectations of the Kingston Accord of 2004. The Kingston Accord emphasises the responsibilities of States with respect to Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against persons with disabilities, in accordance with the Constitution and laws of Caricom’s respective member states. Despite the clarity of treaties, accords and laws persons with disabilities in the Caribbean regions, especially those trying to acquire an education in mainstream schools, do not receive the necessary respect and support (Blackman, 2019; Caribbean

Development Bank, 2018; Caricom, 2013; Gayle-Geddes, 2016). Like Mr. Mitchel, Blackman, (2019), Caribbean Development Bank, (2018) and Caricom, (2013) also emphasise that state holders and policy makers in member states are aware of the discrimination and neglect persons with disabilities face in many States of the Caribbean regions.

The Guyana Persons with Disabilities Act, (2010), Cap. 36:05, emphasises that discrimination against anyone with a disability may take the form of any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of a known disability. Discrimination may reduce or restrict the recognition of any of the human rights of a person with the disability or any rights provided for by the Guyana Persons with Disabilities Act, 2010, Cap. 36:05. Therefore, if teachers do not offer experiences, opportunities and socialisation that cater for children with SEND within mainstream schools, they are breaking the law. Classifying teachers who do not offer experiences to cater for children with SEND as law breakers seem unfair since, according to Mr. Mitchell, teachers are not supported to provide the experiences children with SEND need in mainstream schools.

The Minister of Education in collaboration with the Disability Commission is responsible for the education of all of the nation's children (Guyana Persons with Disabilities Act 2010, Cap. 36:05). The minister needs to ensure that adequate provisions are made in mainstream schools for children with SEND. This means that when teachers do not have the resources and support needed to provide the experiences, opportunities and socialisation, all children need in a mainstream school on a daily basis, the Minister of Education is breaking the laws of Guyana. However, if the country does not have an inclusive framework or evaluative tool that outlines the forms or support and resources needed, it is difficult to see how anyone can be implicated or prosecuted.

The Act also clearly states that any children with SEND should not be excluded from the general mainstream education system. All children in Guyana, whether they are disabled or not, are entitled to free and compulsory primary and secondary education in public schools (Education Act, No. 3 of 1876, Cap 39:01; Guyana Persons with Disabilities Act 2010, Cap. 36:05). The Act also makes provisions for training programmes for teachers specialising in SEND to facilitate the placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools. It is evident that the statements in the Act have not

been implemented and practised in education, especially concerning the specialised training for teachers in SEND.

The minister with responsibility for education and the minister responsible for public services could support children with SEND who face financial challenges. This financial support could be in the form of easily accessed scholarships, grants, loans and other incentives to qualified children with SEND (Guyana Persons with Disabilities Act, 2010 under the Sub-Part II Education). The previous Chief Education Officer of Guyana stated that the establishment of the SEND unit at NCERD was a directive from the Guyana Persons with Disabilities Act, 2010. Its stated mandate is to ensure that adequate provisions are mobilised and deployed in the public mainstream education for all children with SEND. As a result, there was a public advertisement for Special Education Specialists, teachers, inspectors, Special Education Officers and other Special Education Support staff to work in each of the eleven education regions in 2017, which is also contingent upon a directive from the Guyana Persons with Disabilities Act, 2010.

Some advances have been made in the provisions for children with SEND in Guyana's mainstream education system (Cheong et al, 2018, 2019; Ministry of Education Guyana, 2018). One of the advances was the establishment of the assessment and diagnostic centre for children with SEND in 2018 and the opening of a few special schools. There is only one such centre in Guyana and it is located at the teachers' training college in the capital city. There is a need for more provisions in the laws and frameworks to cater for children with SEND.

## **2.10 Training Guyanese teachers to be effective in neighbourhood mainstream schools which include children with SEND**

*The average mainstream teacher in Guyana who was educated at the Cyril Potter College of Education and the University of Guyana is not prepared to handle a lot of children with the SEND in the average mainstream classroom. Teachers improvise daily and stay after work to do free remedial sessions and are still criticised if these children fail national standardised assessments.*

(Mr Mitchel, Teacher, Conversation during classroom observation 2018.)

Mainstream teachers in Guyana need to be educated to effectively manage the placement of children with SEND in their classes in neighbourhood schools. The inadequacy of their training is highlighted by Mr Mitchel. The approximately eleven thousand and fifty-five (N=11055) children with impairments who have never attended schools will be placed in mainstream schools eventually. Therefore, teachers need to be prepared to effectively organise experiences and socialisation for these children as is mandated by law. It is also a significant part of both '*Quality Imperative in Education*' and '*The Education for All Initiative*' of the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education Guyana, 2018).

Several researchers (see Al Hout, 2017; Barrett & Green, 2009; Florian & Rouse, 2009; Sanders & Horn, 1998; Savolainen, 2009; Walsh, 2015) have concluded that the effort to address some deficiencies in teachers' preparedness for the mainstream classroom, as it relates to children with SEND can be linked to deficiencies in initial teacher training. Al Hout, (2017), Barrett & Green, (2009), Florian & Rouse, (2009), Sanders & Horn, (1998), Savolainen, (2009) and Walsh, (2015) have suggested that initial teacher training include modules and practices in Special and Inclusive Education, Disability Management and Creating Social Learning Environment where all children can take part in the teaching and learning interactions. Hence, for children with SEND to have quality education opportunities and learning experiences, Guyanese mainstream teachers need to be trained in the required areas. The Cyril Potter College of Education and the University of Guyana need to make provisions in their initial and advance teacher training for mainstream teachers in the area of SEND.

To improve the effectiveness of mainstream teachers in providing learning experiences for children with SEND, teachers need training to understand children's cultural assets (Rooney, 2018) so they can better utilise them for classroom interactions. Teachers need to assess children's behaviours through a cultural asset lens (Gay, 2010) so that all teachers can recognise that children's cultural diversity is an asset to enhance classroom experiences. To understand the cultural assets of young children is to recognise those different ways of doing, knowing, communicating, learning, and living (Howard, 2018). It is vital for our most vulnerable student populations and children with SEND (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2018). Culture will continue to matter for all children, but it is frequently misunderstood or ignored (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2018). When each child's cultural asset is understood, learning can be enhanced by instruction that honours these

cultural practices and respectfully teaches new practices rooted in other cultures (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2018). For the benefit of all children, mainstream teachers need to be guided to 'brave up,' and take risks inherent in creating educational spaces that disrupt, defy, and re-imagine what it means to teach, and learn, in increasingly diverse worlds (Dover & Rodríguez-Valls, 2018).

Further, researchers across the globe (see Al Hout, 2017; Arnesen, Allen & Simonsen, 2009; Cardona, 2009; Carroll et al., 2003; O'Neill et al., 2009; Reynolds, 2001; Smith & Leonard, 2005; Walsh, 2015) have concluded that teachers' knowledge, beliefs values, attitudes, working cultures and perspectives on SEND affect the teaching and learning interaction and effectiveness of the learning experiences and environment for all children. The emphasis on quality initial teacher education, which includes concentrated training in Special and Inclusive Education, could contribute a new generation of inclusive mainstream teachers who could contribute to building an inclusive learning environment, and new opportunities, for all children.

Qualified teachers who are already in mainstream schools also need continuous professional development in the area of SEND. Teachers need to be trained so that they can be confident in their ability, knowledge and skills to deliver inclusive experiences, opportunities and socialisation. This could enable all children to conquer challenges and barriers they may face in mainstream schools (Cardona, 2009; Carroll et al., 2003; O'Neill et al., 2009; Reynolds, 2001; Smith & Leonard, 2005; UNESCO, 2017; Walsh, 2015).

## **2. 11 Final Thoughts**

My theoretical approach to disability is embedded in the social model of disability (Oliver, 1990, 2013). I also embraced a poststructuralist prospective to analyse the experiences of the children with SEND that I could not analyse with only a social model of disability framework. The literature indicates that mainstream schools are not suitable but could become suitable for children with SEND. In postcolonial developing countries like Guyana, the placement of children with SEND in neighbourhood mainstream schools lacks the necessary support. Children with SEND face many barriers and challenges in mainstream schools. The dynamics of power in mainstream schools and communities have been impacted by the placement of children with SEND

in mainstream schools. In addition, it frames that many rural societies still have harmful cultural and social practices which affect children with SEND in their childhood and these negative conceptions are transmitted into the neighbourhood mainstream schools.

All children can benefit from the placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools. If mainstream teachers are appropriately trained and supported, they could change their resistant attitude to the placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools. Additionally, if there is a formally written inclusive framework and systems for teachers to self-assess their attitudes and practices, it could reduce the many barriers which children with SEND face in their neighbourhood mainstream schools. Children with SEND deserve to have an education with equality and equity in experiences and socialisation as their peers without an identified SEND, which could be achieved in mainstream schools. There are other challenges children with SEND face in rural societies of Guyana such as discrimination and social exclusion, which increase the barriers children with SEND face. Nevertheless, children with SEND are placed in Guyana's mainstream primary schools, as is mandatory by law. This should not happen until classes are smaller, appropriate resources are available, teachers better educated in how to work with disabled children regardless of the impairment or exceptionalities and SEND specialist are available to support teachers as the needs arise.



## **SECTION 2**

### **METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS APPROACH**

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## **Chapter Three: Generating Data**

### **3.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter explored the theoretical framework of this study, poststructuralist perspective to SEND, the social and individual deficit model of disability, inclusive education and laws and policies related to SEND in Guyana. Specifically, the literature relates to the experiences of children with SEND in mainstream schools. It also explored the applicability of the social model of disability in mainstream schools in postcolonial Guyana while analysing the dominant discourse of the individual deficit model of disability. The experiences and preparation of Guyanese teachers in neighbourhood mainstream schools with children with SEND was also presented to examine the extent to which they can effectively cater to the needs of such children.

This chapter explains the philosophies (research, ethical and methodological), principles and approaches employed in the methodology. This chapter provides an explanation of how this research project is situated in relation to the experiences of children with SEND in the two schools for the purpose of data gathering. It also explores how I situated myself in the mainstream primary education system in Guyana and interacted with the participants in the schools.

### **3.1 Research Paradigm**

The research process has three major dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology (Darman, Ubud, Siti & Khusniyah, 2017; De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011; Ponelis, 2015; Yin 2014). My research was conducted using the ontological, epistemological and methodological principles of the Interpretivist Paradigm. The interpretivist approach permitted me to use a poststructuralist's

interpretation in my study facilitated by Clarke's (2005, 2008) situational analysis. I used Clarke's situational analysis because like other interpretive researchers (Clarke, Friese & Washburn, 2018; Whisker, 2018), I embrace its poststructuralist use of traditional grounded theory. Situational analysis has positioned grounded theory in the poststructuralist, interpretive approach to data analysis thirteen years ago. The Interpretivist Paradigm is a broad approach that encompasses many different approaches, similarly concerned with the meanings and experiences of human beings. The central tenet of the interpretivist paradigm is that people are constantly involved in interpreting their ever-changing world as reflected in the two of Guyana's mainstream primary schools, considered in this study.

On one hand, some interpretivist researchers believe that the social world is constructed by people and is, therefore, different from the world of nature. On the other hand, some of them believe that the world of nature is also constructed by people in terms of the meanings it is given (Harrison et al., 2017; Myers, 2009; Neuman, 2011; Patel, 2016; Williamson, 2002a). The experiences of children with SEND placed in Guyana's mainstream primary schools are constructed by the children with SEND themselves, the teachers, other children without an identified SEND and wider society inclusive of the government's discourse including in governmental policy and implementation. The experiences of children with SEND placed in the mainstream primary schools of Guyana are personal and individualised (subjective) to each child. Therefore, interpretivist researchers use meaning oriented methodologies, such as interviewing or participant observation, that rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects (Jonker & Pennink, 2010; Levitt et al., 2017; Ponelis, 2015). In addition, the researcher's participation in the discourse is not a neutral reflection (Laclau 1995 as cited in Rasiński, 2011; Parkes et al., 2010). In talking about the experiences of children with SEND in Guyana, through this study, I, therefore, actively helped to create the meanings which were established.

Further, the Interpretivist paradigm allows researchers to derive constructs from the field by an in-depth examination of the phenomenon of interest (Bryman, 2012; Harrison et al., 2017). In addition to listening to the children relate their experiences; I relied on my observations of the experiences and the participation of children with SEND to develop an understanding of their situation and experience in school. These

observations revealed experiences which were not expressed by the children themselves. Experiences revealed through observation allowed me to better understand the meanings expressed by the children with SEND. The hidden and unconscious experiences expressed were situated in peculiar conditions and were linked to particular phenomena in the mainstream schools.

The movement of understanding in the interpretivist paradigm is continuously from the whole to the part and back to the whole (Levitt, et al., 2017). To fully understand the phenomenon, the mainstream education system in postcolonial Guyana, I first examined the 'whole'. Attempts were made to understand the phenomenon in part; that is, the identities of the children with SEND. The understanding of the experiences of each child was then aligned to the experiences of the children in the whole mainstream education system. The alignment of individual and collective experiences allowed for an understanding of the experiences of children with SEND as situated in the wider school system. As stated in the previous paragraphs, the movement of understanding of the interpretivist paradigm (from whole to part and to the whole) exists in multiple realities. Realities can be explored, and constructed through human interactions, and meaningful actions (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011; Levitt et al., 2017; Parker 2012; Stewart, 2014). Moreover, realities are shared with partialities, complexities, complications, contradictions and instabilities in their environment (Bischoping & Gazso, 2016; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Livholts & Timbuktu, 2015; MacLure, 2013; Mills, Chapman, Bonner, & Francis, 2007). Therefore, like other interpretivists (Mills et al, 2007; Rahi, 2017), I believe that knowledge can only be obtained by a profound interpretation of the subject. Through a poststructuralist lens, I presented knowledge which reflected the multiplicity of perspectives and subjectivities about the placement and experiences of children with SEND in the two mainstream primary schools under study.

### **3.2 Reflection on Data Protocol**

Data collection commenced at the end of June 2018 at Saints Primary and lasted for six months. Initially, two days each week were spent in the two schools. June 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> were the first two days spent at Saints Primary School, and June 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> were spent at Angel Primary School. The data collection protocols were strictly followed in

every area except the proposed two days to be spent in each school. When theoretical sampling directed me to speak to a particular group of children, it forced me to spend a third day alternatively in each school. There were some ethical dilemmas which made data gathering challenging. These are discussed below.

### **3.3 Participants**

The population for this study was the 2018 cohort of pupils and their mainstream teachers at Saints and Angel Primary schools in Region 5 - Mahaica-Berbice (refer to the description presented in chapter one), is a rural administrative region. Pupils with SEND in Grade Three to Six classes of the two mainstream primary schools were the target population. The pupils' ages ranged from six to twelve years old. The children comprised of Amerindians, East Indians, Africans, and Mixed Races, which reflected the diversity of children in the two mainstream primary schools. Some of the children with SEND lived in extremely impoverished conditions. The population also included forty-four mainstream teachers from the two primary schools.

While the population under study consisted of the children and their teachers in two primary schools, the primary focus was on children with SEND. Hence, at the outset, the participants came from the group of children with SEND. As my study progressed, however, two (2) children without identified SEND who played significant roles in shaping some of the experiences of children with SEND were included. They directly contributed to the knowledge constructed, and the meanings interpreted from the socialisation and experiences of children with SEND. The teachers from the two schools all fulfilled the characteristics required for participants because they were mainstream teachers at the two schools and all had children with SEND placed in their classes (see teacher description in Appendix C, p. 352 & Appendix D, p. 353).

Children were identified and selected to participate because I observed that they were knowledgeable about and had subjective experiences in the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, et al., 2011; Etikan & Bala, 2017; Palinkas, et al., 2016; Halej, 2017). I first acquired a list of children with SEND from each class from participating schools. I used the list in addition to my observations and theoretical sampling to select children who could potentially participate in my study. While participants were selected, they were

made aware of my study and the issue to be discussed. They were told that they were free to choose whether to participate or not.

Initially, I had intended to include thirty children with SEND and their mainstream teachers from the two schools. However, thirty-eight children were included; thirty-six with identified SEND and two without identified SEND who shared similar relational elements in the experiences of children with SEND in the two schools. In ethnographic studies, situatedness of experiences not planned for are revealed in complexities (Corte & Irwin, 2017; Rodgers, 2007). In this study, such situated experiences occurred when parents visited the schools and voluntarily shared their views on the experiences of children with and without SEND. I, therefore, added their voices to the discourses because they were part of the situation and social arena. This was an approach to situational analysis taken by Clarke (2005). Theoretical sampling guided me to seek out additional data sources to clarify the situated meanings of the children with SEND who had already been interviewed. The selection included children with the following impairments/disorders:

1. Speech Impairment – Mute
2. Learning Disabilities / Learning Challenges
3. Emotional Behaviour Disorder
4. Dyslexia
5. Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
6. Intellectual Disabilities
7. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
8. Exceptional Intelligence / Giftedness – Exceptional / Giftedness
9. Dysgraphia
10. Down's Syndrome
11. Not known

## **Characteristics of the Children**

### ***Saints Primary School***

The children from Saints Primary School exhibited many types of SEND characteristics, which can be summarised as:

- 1 Intellectual Disabilities / Learning Disabilities / Learning Challenges
- 2 Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) / Emotional Behaviour Disorder
- 3 Dyslexia
- 4 Speech Impairment (Mute) / Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
- 5 Exceptional Intelligence / Giftedness
- 6 Dysgraphia
- 7 Down's Syndrome
- 8 Not known

**Table 3.1: Characteristics of the children who participated from Saints Primary**

#	Children	Ethnicity	Gender	Grade	Age	SEND
1	Akeen	African	M	5	10	Learning Disabilities
2	Alicia	African	F	3	7	Exceptional Intelligence
3	Amera	Amerindian	F	3	7	SLCN
4	Arif	East Indian	M	6	12	Learning Disabilities
5	Arifa	East Indian	F	5	11	Learning Disabilities
6	Belie	East Indian	F	6	11	Emotional and Behaviour Disorder; Learning Challenges
7	Bobby	African	M	6	11	Dyslexia; SLCN
8	Cassy	African	F	4	9	Down Syndrome; SLCN
9	Ceon	Mixed Race	M	5	10	Not Known
10	Daniel	African	M	5	10	ADHD; Exceptional Intelligence
11	Joel	African	M	5	11	Learning Disabilities
12	Jonese	African	F	4	9	SLCN
13	Joseph	African	M	5	11	Intellectual Disabilities
14	Junior Bob	African	M	5	11	Dysgraphia; Dyslexia; Learning Disabilities; Emotional and Behaviour Disorder
15	Macy	Mixed Race	F	6	11	Learning Disabilities
16	Marcy	African	M	6	11	Emotional and Behaviour Disorder; Learning Disabilities
17	Nial	African	M	6	12	Emotional and Behaviour Disorder
18	Rosemary	African	F	6	11	Learning Disabilities Developmental Delays
19	Roshanie	East Indian	F	6	12	Speech Impairment –Mute

### ***Angel Primary***

The children at Angel Primary School, who participated in my study, also exhibited many types of SEND characteristics, which can be summarised as:

1. Visual Impairment - Palpebral Slant Eyes

2. Auditory Impairment
3. Developmental Delays
4. Learning Disabilities
5. ADHD / Emotional Behaviour Disorder
6. Down Syndrome
7. Autism; Exceptional Intelligence
8. Epilepsy; Physical Impairment – Paralysis
9. Speech Impairment
10. Dyslexia

**Table 3.2: Characteristics of the children who participated from Angel Primary**

#	Children	Ethnicity	Gender	Grade	Age	SEND
1	Akon	East Indian	M	5	10	Learning Disabilities
2	Amanda	African	F	4	9	Down Syndrome; Learning Disabilities
3	Besham	East Indian	M	5	10	ADHD
4	Boyo	Amerindian	M	6	11	Developmental Delays; Learning Disabilities
5	Devi	East Indian	F	6	11	Exceptional Intelligence
6	Holly	African	F	3	7	Visual Impairment - Palpebral Slant Eyes; Developmental Delays
7	Jasmine	East Indian	F	6	11	Autism; Exceptional Intelligence
8	Latchman	East Indian	M	6	11	Learning Disabilities
9	Pam	African	F	4	9	Epilepsy; Physical Impairment – Paralysis
10	Pooran	East Indian	M	6	11	Learning Disabilities
11	Prem	East Indian	M	6	12	Speech Impairment
12	Quan	East Indian	M	6	10	Exceptional Intelligence
13	Ravi	East Indian	M	5	10	Learning Disabilities
14	Rawl	African	M	5	10	Visual Impairment; Learning Disabilities
15	Sabrina	Amerindian	F	3	7	Dyslexia
16	Shantie	East Indian	F	6	11	Emotional and Behaviour Disorder; Learning Disabilities
17	Thomas	East Indian	M	6	11	Not Known
18	Tom	African	M	5	10	Learning Disabilities; Emotional and Behaviour Disorder
19	Triscia	Mixed Race	F	6	12	Auditory Impairment; Emotional and Behaviour Disorder

### 3.4 Research Design

While I am a native of Guyana, I had not worked in the education system at the classroom level for over five years. I needed a research design which would embed me in the lived experiences of the children with SEND. Therefore, ethnography seemed to

be the most appropriate research design to facilitate this. This is because ethnographic research is a process that engages the ethnographer in 'dialogue with the entire social reality encountered' (Corte & Irwin, 2017; Rodgers, 2007). In relation to this, Berry (2011) states that ethnography is the study of the socio-cultural contexts, processes, and meanings within cultural systems. It is a microscopic approach. I used Rodgers', (2007) and Berry's (2011) conception of ethnography because it allowed me to reveal and analyse the experiences, socialisation and barriers to full participation faced by children with SEND in the two mainstream primary schools in their socio-cultural contexts. Ethnography is one way to better understand the contextual (dis)engagement processes and meanings in a population (Corte & Irwin, 2017; Rodgers, 2007). I saw ethnography as a way of being situated in the two primary schools under study, observing, listening to and gaining an understanding of the experiences of the children with SEND.

It is widely known in the area of study that I was a successful mainstream teacher and currently a university lecturer in the field of SEND and curriculum studies at the University of Guyana. As a result, some of the children, teachers and parents were familiar with my presence in the schools, especially at Saints Primary School where I was once a senior teacher. Parents kept referring to my previous identity as a successful Grade Six Assessment teacher, a role which they were comfortable with. Researcher identity, however, is never secure, bounded and controlled (Wainwright, Marandet & Rizvi, 2018) and some teachers were also unsettled initially because of my previous identity as a teacher assessor/lecturer. I spent the first two weeks of fieldwork simply '*hanging about*' so that the students and staff became more comfortable with my presence as a researcher, by simply being in the schools, interacting with the teachers and children, and talking about my project. By the end of the first two weeks of '*hanging about*', my new identity was accepted by all except two parents at Saints Primary school whose objections are discussed in chapter six.

The placement of children with SEND in disabling learning environments creates socially context-specific experiences (Iphofren, 2017). Ethnography allowed me to be part of the environment and socially context-specific experiences, which form the research site. I was able to map the experiences to context specific situations, which helped to established themes for analysis.



### ***3.4.1 Unstructured Interviews***

Further, being fully situated and embedded allowed me, as a participant, to fully observe and to have the opportunity and time to interview at least one child per week at each school. Each interview with the children lasted for approximately twenty minutes. According to Tisdall (2012) and Wainwright, Marandet & Rizvi (2018) researchers need to respect children's childhood, and so, interview time can be extended in circumstances beneficial to the children while maintaining respect for childhood (Tisdall, 2012; Wainwright, Marandet & Rizvi, 2018). For example, Daniel, who has ADHD, could not complete an interview without several breaks. I respected Daniel's needs and extended the time so that Daniel could complete the interview without feeling under pressure. For confidentiality, I privately interviewed children in a room assigned by the head teacher of each school as agreed by the Ministry of Education, Guyana. The exact time for the interview was negotiated with the children with each being interviewed twice. A third interview was necessitated only when either of the first two interviews was interrupted. For example, sometimes children would exhibit overwhelming emotions forcing the interview to be ended earlier than expected (see chapter five).

Interviews enabled interviewees to speak with their own voices and express their thoughts and feelings (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Halej, 2017; Palinkas, et al., 2016). Unstructured interviews are a natural extension of participant observation because they so often occur as part of ongoing participant observation (Patton, 2002 as cited in Jones, 2017). I was situated in the two mainstream schools' discursive practices and discourses. I engaged with the children with SEND when they were ready and also sometimes in a situation which illustrated their lived experiences. Engaging the children with SEND in situations which illustrated their lived experiences enabled me to construct the conversations around the present experience and situation, which would not have been possible with preconstructed specific questions. I needed this flexibility to capture the personal and situated experiences of the children with SEND. This flexibility also permitted participants to approach me and initiate conversations, giving the participants more power and control over the interview (Halej, 2017; Jones, 2017).

Unstructured interviews can expose the researcher to unanticipated themes and help him/her establish a better understanding of the interviewees' social reality from the

interviewees' perspectives (Halej, 2017; Jones, 2017). In this study, therefore, unstructured interviews were used to gather data on the social reality and perspectives on experiences of children with SEND. The interviews were guided from the observations I made as I participated in the activities of each school. Neither the questions nor the answer categories were predetermined as the categories were determined after the data was generated. I also utilised open questions which allowed the children the freedom to choose what they shared with me and when or how they shared it. This flexibility also allowed conversations to occur at any time when incidents occurred relating to the experiences and socialisation of children with SEND while giving children control over interviews allowed me to gather data which was hidden, unanticipated, and unexpected in its full subjective reality.

### ***3.4.2 Participant Observation***

I also used participant observation to gather data about participants' experiences and socialisation (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Peticca-Harris et al., 2016; Roulet et al., 2017; Tedlock, 2000). I began by observing the children whom the teachers identified as having SEND. Participant observation can provide access to behaviour or organisations, or parts of organisations, which would otherwise remain inaccessible. However, gaining and maintaining access to such organisations is often a challenging task because the guardians of the organisations may try to control the level of access allowed (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Peticca-Harris et al., 2016; Roulet et al., 2017; Tedlock, 2000). Overt Participant Observation involves the researcher being open with the group he/she is studying (Shah, 2017) as this allows the aims of study to be shared intimately with the participants. While I shared the study I was mindful of how I shared with my adult participants and the children. Epstein, (1998, p. 34) suggestion about children really understand what research is or what a researcher does guided how I talked about my study with children.

I participated in every aspect of mainstream primary education at both schools. For example, I had lunch in the communal teachers' room and became a member of both schools' public interface group. Fully participating the daily activities of the two schools allowed me to better understand the experiences of children from the perspective of school and society. During discussion with parents in this group, two

parents questioned the support I was providing to children with SEND who they perceived as not being the priority for support. These parents wanted me to support the children without identified SEND who they felt were likely to excel at the National Grade Six Assessment and, therefore, need to be given priority support. Being deeply woven into the mainstream schools allowed me to understand the discourses, discursive fields and practices which shaped the experiences of children with SEND in the two participating schools. I felt the frustration of the mainstream teachers and witnessed the experiences and socialisation of the children with SEND directly within the social milieu in which they occurred.

As I participated in the discourses, I became so embedded in the subjectivities that sometimes the meanings became overwhelming for me. There were cases where I felt so emotionally overwhelmed and vulnerable that I took short walks to reassure myself that I was a researcher in the field. I was extremely overwhelmed when I observed children with SEND being abused racially by their class teacher (see chapter five and six). Being overwhelmed by the experiences of children with SEND led to me almost losing faith as a researcher. It was challenging being a part of the schools because I became aware of other practices that made children with SEND more vulnerable and at times unsafe.

### ***3.4.3 Focus Group***

I facilitated eight (8) focus group discussions altogether with sixteen (16) teachers; eight teachers from each of the two participating schools. This meant that four (4) focus group discussions at each school were conducted over the fieldwork period. I used the work of Loreman (2009) and Booth and Ainscow (2002, 2011) to provide stimuli for these discussions. The research questions produced the following four themes which guided the discussion for each of the four focus group discussions at the two participating schools:

- Experiences of children with SEND.
- Emotions expressed by children with SEND about their experiences.

- Reasonable adjustments and modifications made within the classrooms by mainstream primary school teachers for children with SEND.
- Adapting a school-based social model framework contextually for use across Guyana.

Several authors (see Kinalski et al., 2017; Mayer, 2015; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Weiss et al., 2001) have indicated that focus groups which include reflective practice provide opportunities for participants to share deep thoughts, opinions and understanding on critical issues and problems. During the focus groups sessions, I initiated the discussion by providing the stimulation and theme that was the focus. There were times when teachers deviated from the focus, in these cases; the conversation was refocused to ensure that the teachers remained focused on the specified themes. I allowed the teachers to take the lead by asking open-ended questions such as ‘*Can you tell me about your experience of having children with SEND in your class?*’

During discussions with reference to the first theme, ‘*Experiences of children with SEND*’, some teachers became emotional while sharing their experiences. The emotional reactions of some teachers stimulated responses from their colleagues who were in support of the individual deficit model of disability. The interaction generated data illustrating why children with SEND placed in the two mainstream schools become doubly vulnerable because of their teachers’ support of the individual deficit model of disability. The emotional responses also showed the difficulties that some teachers face because they ascribe to an alternative discourse. Some teachers felt limited as they had been unable to provide suitably modified experiences for children with SEND.

The focus group discussions opened up the discursive spaces to allow possible opportunities and challenges to contextualising the Index and Loreman’s features of inclusive education within the local educational practice, context, culture, and circumstance in Guyana to be explored. They also aided a discussion of how the social model of disability frameworks could be used more broadly across Guyana and the production of the inclusive checker for mainstream schools. The focus groups also became the pilot team for the contextualised frameworks, theory and checker (see

chapter eight). The focus group discussions allowed me to enable some of the richest discussion on SEND in the two participating schools.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure ethical responsibility in all stages of any research. My study involved participants who were extremely vulnerable. It was particularly important to approach the research with sensitivity and with care. Guyana is a very small country with a population of approximately 740,000 (Bureau of Statistics, Government of Guyana, 2018). The two schools studied are located in small tightly knit communities, which made preserving total anonymity very challenging or almost impossible even with the use of pseudonyms. I explained the possibility of being recognised in publications resulting from my study to the teachers and the parents of the children. However, I made stringent efforts to safeguard the identity of all participants. I took precautions to protect the safety of children and their integrity in their learning environment. I told all participants of their rights to withdraw from my study at any stage. In addition, I informed them that they could request to have their contributions omitted from my study.

I ensured that my research complied with BERA (2014) and with articles 16 -21 (Children, Vulnerable Young People and Vulnerable Adults) with additional emphasis on Articles 3 and 12 from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 3 states that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child need to be the primary consideration. Article 12 states that children who are capable of forming their views need to be granted the right to express their opinions freely in all matters affecting them, commensurate with their age and maturity. All the children with SEND who participated in this study were allowed to form their opinions about their experiences within mainstream primary schools and to express these views freely in all matters affecting them. Teachers' participation in the focus group sessions was voluntary. They were made aware of the study and the topic or issue to be discussed at the beginning of each focus group discussions.

BERA (2014), states that before the commencement of any study/primary research, one needs to get the consent/permission from the target sample of the population. In terms of BERA's consent /permission, I first sought permission then received approval from the Ministry of Education in Guyana, university's ethics committee and consent from

participants. The BERA guidelines also state that children should be facilitated to give informed consent. Informed consent is more than a form or requirement in research, it is a process. Information need to be presented to participants so that they can voluntarily decide whether or not to participate in research (Nussbaum et al., 2017). I gave all participants information that was, as far as possible, simple to understand, so that they could voluntarily decide whether or not to participate in the research. While the informed consent process is prospective and takes place before any research activity, consent was also an ongoing process between the participants and me for the duration of my study.

All participants were informed of any significant, new information or findings during the study that might have affected their willingness to continue participating. The consent process in my study was free of coercion or undue influence. Regarding the children's observations, the children who were interviewed were also observed in their classrooms and around the schools and I also explained that they were consenting to a process which included being observed as well as speaking freely to me. The expected interactions with children were discussed during the process of providing information to allow for informed consent.

This study involved primary school children from six to twelve years old with SEND (see Table 3.1 and 3.2). Some children did not understand what it meant to be a researcher. Some of the children also had cognitive impairments, and this made it further challenging for them to understand the role of a researcher. I tried my best to explain to the children that I was interested in understanding their experiences at school. I was conscious when conversing with children that it could not be presumed that there was a shared understanding of terms used. Epstein found that the term '*researcher*' appeared to have no meaning for at least one child that had queried her presence in her school (Epstein, 1998, p. 34). Nespor and Ward state that they also found the pupils were puzzled by the use of the term research (Nespor, 1998; Ward, 2016) and that they possibly understood it as an extension of research processes they are already familiar with from class work. By recognising that others have encountered problems over such terminology, I had an informal session at the beginning with the children in small groups where I explained what research is in terms they could understand and what my research entails. As a practical activity, I allowed the children to share ways of how people can find out about something. For example, by asking

people; watching and learning; reading things. I then asked if the children would mind if I watched them, asked them “things” and read some of the things they had done in class or some of the things written about them such as their reports. I explained that I wanted to find out if there were ways of improving school life for them.

Further, I had an ongoing informal programme to check participants understanding of vocabulary during the interview process. I made it clear that they could say anything they liked and that I would tell other people about it, but without revealing who they were, e.g. by naming them. I judiciously noted the willingness and the behaviours of the children who participated. I was observant of the non-verbal cues such as body language and facial expressions. I also observed how the children individually approached me to share their experiences. An ethical code was established between the school and me. The established ethical code started with parental consent being obtained before any interactions commenced with the children. For the children who were unable to read the consent form, I read it to them and allowed them to give verbal consent which was audio recorded. When I interviewed the children, I continuously checked that they were still willing to participate.

Mainstream schools in Guyana do not have decentralised autonomy. It is the standard operating procedure in Guyana that permission for all educational research is granted by the Chief or Deputy Chief Education Officer from the Ministry of Education. Permission was granted by the Deputy Chief Education Officer, and the letter was shared with the participating schools. Despite having centralised consent, I still sought the consent of the head teachers of each school. I followed all ethical principles guiding the conduct of the interviews and focus groups. I shared the results of the study from the analysis and interpretation of the data with the two primary schools after the research report had been completed, following submission to the University of Roehampton. I was also expected to give a copy of the research report to the National Centre for Education Resource Development (NCERD). This is also the standard operating procedure for research in Guyana.

### **3.6 Structural Issues**

My study followed the standards and procedural principles and expectations of a research student of the University of Roehampton. These were deemed necessary

before embarking on fieldwork, working with participants, and also to ensure the safety and security of data. At an early stage, the research was outlined and presented to the Education Research Degree Committee for approval and, ethical permission was also sought.

I received ethics approval on April 10, 2018 and was allocated reference number EDU 189/ 152. My study could not commence as soon as ethical approval was received because of methodological concerns raised by the Research Degree Committee, University of Roehampton, relating to the use of Clarke's situational analysis. These concerns were addressed, and final project confirmation was received on June 19, 2018, after which the official study immediately commenced.

In Guyana, one important structural issue addressed by the Ministry of Education Guyana, was access to the schools. Despite being granted access by the central hierarchy of the Ministry of Education Guyana, permission was again sought from the two schools and I discussed the study with the head teacher of the individual schools.

### **3.7 Process Issues**

Before I commenced my study, I shared information about the project and about SEND which included some negative stereotypes in the discourses with parents. Despite this, during the fieldwork, two parents refused to allow their children to participate in my study. The two parents felt that participating in my study meant their children were willingly accepting the label of children with SEND. Due to the negative stereotypes in Guyana about SEND, I could not convince these two parents to allow their children to participate despite the children wanting to be involved. Their rights were respected and duly noted.

Teachers at both schools continuously sought additional support and guidance to organise support for the children with SEND included in their classes. Spending the third day alternating between the two schools also allowed me to provide SEND support to some teachers as requested, which I did while maintaining an awareness of how this might affect my study focus. In addition, I was often requested by the Ministry of Education and University of Guyana to attend consultations with the Caribbean Development Bank disability survey and Caricom SEND curriculum review for teacher



training and UNICEF MICS 6 survey. These sessions sometimes took me away from the two schools and created challenges when I had scheduled interviews or focus group discussions with busy teachers, which were difficult to reschedule.

### **3.8 Distressing Issues**

From the onset of the fieldwork, there were a number of distressing issues for me to deal with. For example, Junior Bob, a child with multiple learning disabilities, scratched a heart design on my vehicle. He said he had done it to show that he loved me. I calmly told Junior Bob that I was upset, and I also explained to him why it was inappropriate to use rocks to draw hearts or any image on a private motor vehicle. I also talked to him about how to express his feelings in a more positive and acceptable manner.

There were children with SEND who indicated that they had been abused in various forms at home and in school. I had to address questions about how to ethically, and sensibly, address the principle of 'do no harm'. How could I fully ensure that such sensitive information would not be misused, and that participants' openness or vulnerability would not be exploited? Should I respect the research participants and delete sensitive sections of recordings? I discussed these with my Director of Studies as ethical principles required me to report abuse. It needs to be noted that this was first discussed with the children.

I was challenged by parents who were still confused by my role as a researcher in the school where I was once the leading Senior Grade Six teacher. They were parents of the children in the National Grade Six Assessment Class. They felt I had returned to the school as a teacher because that was how they saw me. Despite being given information about my new role in the schools, parents begun contesting my identity. They asked the head teachers, when I would take control of the Grade Six Class. One parent told me that I had become lazy, that I had returned to school but was only sitting or walking around. This parent also asked me when I would start teaching as I used to in the past.

During my observations, I noticed children with SEND being neglected because they were classified unsuitable for mainstream schools. The teachers indicated that they could not do anything without resources or support to help these children. This caused

me further turmoil. I was conflicted because I wanted to help as much as I could while still maintaining my research identity. I felt a sense of guilt and uneasiness, over what I saw as direct marginalisation of vulnerable children.

In addition, trainee teachers from the University of Guyana and Cyril Potter College of Education wanted me to assist them with their assignments and course work. When I explained that I was unable to render assistance beyond the stated boundaries agreed to with the ethical committee; these teachers saw it as a personal refusal to help. Teachers wanted support in their classes. Some teachers saw my presence in the classrooms as additional adult presence and walked out of their classes to attend to personal matters leaving children unattended while I was observing.

It became clear from observations that children with SEND were isolated and bullied. There were cases revealed by the children when they were too afraid of being seen as feeble to report they were being bullied. This allowed the bullies, who were mostly children without identified SEND, to continue their abusive behaviour. I became extremely saddened by this situation and even writing field notes became distressing. There were days when children with SEND were seen in the community but not in school. They seemed to prefer to be away from the school because they felt unwanted, neglected and unsupported (see chapter five – Junior Bob's Experiences). Some days I lost composure and took on the responsibility of teaching classes which were left unsupervised because their teachers had left for classes at the University of Guyana.

Mainstream teachers made me aware that a dichotomy existed between 'us' (teachers) and 'them' (the children in general). The dichotomy was a disturbing segregation and categorisation but one which is normalised in Guyana. The awareness of this existing dichotomy brought me to an emotionally vulnerable state. I took the afternoon off fieldwork that day (Thursday, September 27, 2018) and reflected on my past as a mainstream teacher. I particularly reflected on the extent to which I had participated in this structural segregation indirectly when I was a mainstream teacher. Unfortunately, I was unable to provide an answer that made me feel comfortable about my practice and this was distressing.

### **3.9 Relationship Issues**

Some relationship issues generated a number of difficult issues for the research. My identity as a lecturer at the University of Guyana, and particularly as a member of the of the observation team for mainstream teachers, made senior teachers wary of being open with me on some issues in their school. For this reason, I was mindful of Pink's (2011: 271) advice on the production of shared knowledge, rather than seeing the activity as one of collecting data on participants. Pink's advice was supported by Ryan and Lobman's (2007) recommendation to pay attention to nonverbal behaviour in the context of the questions or comments. Moreover, Clarke (2005) recommends that the researcher uses relationships to understand the conditions and elements of a particular situation. I started sharing experiences which could benefit the teachers in their classroom like the Southern Inclusive checker for mainstream schools and the teachers became more willing to share their experiences as well. In addition, I acknowledged every contribution the teachers made to this study and to the discourse on SEND in Guyana.

It became necessary to negotiate how much could be acknowledged or how much interest could be shown in the children's work and teachers' actions in the classroom as this affected how the teachers and children perceived me. When I was no longer seen as a senior mainstream teacher, I was viewed as another mainstream teacher by some children with SEND. Being seen as a teacher caused challenges for some children because they were of the belief that I shared similar conceptions to other teachers (see chapter five and seven). For example, if I was seen associating with the teachers who the children framed as negative, this meant that I was also one of those teachers. In contrast, when the teachers accepted me as part of the school, they no longer censored their behaviours and conversations. This openness was extremely useful as it allowed me to better understand their collective consciousness and the dominant discourse about the placement of children with SEND in mainstream schools.

### **3.10 Embracing Subjectivity**

Situations are related and subjectively positioned (Clarke, 2005). This study required vulnerable children with SEND and their mainstream teachers to speak about their lived experiences with me. There were biases in statements about their experiences, and feelings about such experiences, which were shared with me. These interactions generate personal relationships between the researcher and participant; thus, the knowledge gained is anticipated to be context-specific and value-laden (Albon, 2011; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2013), which generates subjective knowledge.

The experiences of children with SEND add value to the situated subjectivities in the two mainstream schools because I could not manipulate or control the environment. I became a part of the environment by participating in the various discourses on SEND. I am explicitly acknowledging the embodiment and situatedness of the participants and myself in my research. In fact, I embrace the subjectivities presented since the aim of my study was not to just identify facts but to understand their meanings as they relate to the experiences of children with SEND. Embracing the subjectivities allowed me to better understand the intended meaning even when participants' statements seemed heavily laden with emotions. Keeping a reflective observation journal and records of all data collected was necessary to help establish the trustworthiness of the research while embracing such embodied subjectivities.

There needed to be continuous awareness that discourses, discursive fields and discursive practices are constitutive of social relations in many ways (Allan, 2010; Whitburn, 2016). I had to acknowledge that I was subjective by being part of these social relations because I was a participant in the two mainstream schools. I always reminded myself of Besley's (2015) and Rose's (1998) statements that it is through discourse that meanings, subjects, and subjectivities are formed. In chapter two (Literature Review), I echoed other researchers statements that subjectivity is dependent on discourse (Foucault, 1972; Laclau 1995 as cited in Rasiński, 2011). In doing so, I acknowledged that my participation in the discourse is not a neutral reflection and, while I embrace it, I have been transparent about it in the data analysis.

By embracing subjectivity in this manner, I need to emphasise that in this study, the approach taken is that of mapping situations, social relations and positions of

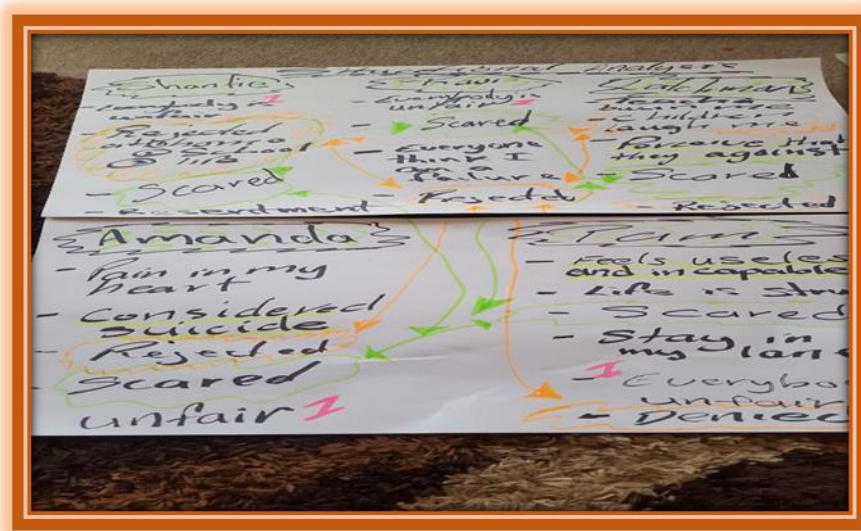
participants in the discourses as posited by Clarke, (2005), Clarke and Friese, (2007), Clarke & Star, (2008) and Pohlmann & Colell, (2017). My well-documented database can validate such maps, and, in this way, the subjectivities were objectively presented. This reflects Robson's (2011) position that researchers need to be able to show others what they have done, beginning with the conceptualisation of their study's design, through data collection protocols to details of the analysis.

### **3.11 Establishing Trustworthiness in Research**

I embraced the subjectivities presented because of the nature of my study as the first step to develop trustworthiness in my research. Qualitative researchers, in particular, need to establish integrity in their research, the data and the analysis (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Moreover, as posited by Korstjens & Moser, (2018) and Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, (2017), it is critical that qualitative researchers establish credibility, transferability, conformability, dependability and reflexivity in the quest for transparency and trustworthiness. To be accepted as trustworthy, qualitative researchers are required to demonstrate that the research is conducted rigorously and methodically and that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematising, and disclosing the methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Nowell et al, 2017).

In this regard, I have been open and made clear each phase of the research. I systematically outline throughout the thesis each step taken and modified through negotiation with the participants in the field. I aim to present the interpretive meaning of the statements of the participants about their lived experiences. I used situational and positional maps to triangulate conditions, relations and positions in the situatedness of the statements by the children, their teachers, parents and my observations. This started with a messy situational map and ended with a saturated relational map. With this, I am confident that the data, which has come from multiple sources in the research site, is credible and triangulated.

**Image 3.1: An initial messy relational map**



While the data was gathered in one of Guyana's ten administrative regions, the participants reflected the traditions, culture and practices which is constitutive of a Guyanese citizen (see chapter one and nine). Throughout my study, I have illustrated how the outcomes of the analysis can be contextualised to this setting and applied to other regions in Guyana. Concerning wider applicability of this research, I was invited by the Deputy Chief Education Officer of Guyana to the Regional Education Officers Statutory Meeting in October and November 2018 where I was asked to share my research. All eleven Regional Education Officers indicated that my findings reflected the situation in their education districts. Children with SEND are being marginalised constitutive of reoccurring negative variables such as history, culture, resources and lack of knowledge on SEND.

**Table 3.3: Trustworthiness Criteria of Research Design** (Adapted from Yin, 2014: 45-49 and Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 289-331)

<i>Conventional Tests</i>	<i>Naturalistic Criteria</i>	<i>Tactic(s) in this study</i>	<i>Example/Descriptor Applicable to Present Study</i>	<i>Phase in Research</i>
<b>Construct Validity</b>	<b>Credibility</b>	Use multiple sources of evidence	<b>Methods:</b> Audio recording, Unstructured interviews, Focus group discussions, participant observation <b>Informants:</b> mainstream teachers; children with SEND, Children without SEND, Parents.	Data collection
		Establish a chain of evidence	<b>Collecting and offering</b> sufficient evidence to enable readers to make a judgement on the merit of analysis and interpretation. <b>Showing extracts</b> of situational maps (Clarke, 2005)	Data collection
		Have (i) discussions on statements with participants; (ii) key informants review transcripts and maps	Research Participants Research supervisor Director of Studies	Data collection Data Analysis Report Composition
<b>Internal Validity</b>	<b>Credibility</b>	Situational Maps	<i>Decentring the knowing subject (Foucault, 1975). Mapping all the elements in the situation. Embrace researcher's subjectivities. The openness of data analysis.</i>	Data Analysis
		Relational Maps	<i>Mapping relationality, positionality and situatedness in the conditions and elements of the statements.</i>	Data Analysis
		Presenting Negatives	<i>Examination of negative cases for possible contribution. Showing the differences and negatives in the data set.</i>	Data Analysis
<b>External Validity</b>	<b>Transferability</b>	Use of theory	<i>From a critical review of the literature Using collectives of situations to formulate sensitising concepts and substantive theories. Provide a deep and thick explanation of the situation. Context-specific descriptions in maps.</i>	Research design / Conclusion
<b>Reliability</b>	<b>Dependability</b>	Use Data Collection Protocol Develop data database	<i>Documenting and keeping a full record of procedures and rules for carrying out data collection. Keeping a full record of evidence collected / actual database for inspection by a third party e.g. Dated audio transcripts, notes of interviews, reflective journal</i>	Data Collection Data Collection & Analysis
		Maintaining Data Analysis Records	<i>Keeping a full record of evidence of analysing data cartographically. Reveal maps in analysis and building sensitising concepts</i>	Data Analysis
	<b>Conformability</b>	Checking Method Approach	<i>Data is 'objectively' documented to check whether findings, inferences etc. are grounded in the data</i>	Audit of study
		Openness	<i>Reveal the salient discourses within the situation of inquiry</i>	Data Analysis, Audit of study
		The Social	<i>Reveal the complexities of situations as the basis of social life.</i>	Data Analysis, Audit of study
	<b>Reflexivity</b>	Research Design	<i>Be more reflexive and consider research design from the onset of the project to the conclusion of the project.</i>	Audit of study

This research reflects the experiences of children with SEND in two mainstream primary schools. These children revealed their lived experiences and these are reflected in this thesis with an audit trail for each step of data analysis. The data analysis process has been both exhaustive and rigorous to ensure that the stated interpretive meanings are dependable (see chapter four for more on the precise approach to data analysis).

My final thought, in establishing trustworthiness is reflexivity. Writing a qualitative thesis reflects the iterative nature of the qualitative research process where data analysis is continuous while there is an on-going process of simultaneous fine-tuning. Researchers are encouraged to keep a self-critical account of the research process, including their internal and external dialogues (Tobin & Begley, 2004). I have maintained a self-critical account of the research process to ensure that the process was genuinely trustworthy, which is further outlined in the table shown above

### **3.12 Transcribing Issues**

Transcribing was sometimes a challenge because of the various dialects in Guyanese Creolese, which are spoken by the communities in the catchment area of the two schools under study. The multiple dialects made it difficult to transcribe accurately in order to facilitate reliable interpretation despite the fact that I am a native Guyanese. One of the solutions to this problem was to consult with people in the community and the mainstream teachers to ensure that my interpretation of the meaning of some of the comments and statements was constitutive of the speakers' intent and valid.

Even expert speakers of Guyanese Creolese and English find it challenging to differentiate between Creole usage and errors in English grammar (Semple-McBean & Creighton, 2018; Semple-McBean, 2017). This problem is principally due to the fact that approximation to the orthography of Standard English is very close. For example, in the statements, Teacha, meh yam-out all meh food (Teacher, I ate all my food), there are no significant differences in phonology (teacha for teacher or meh for me/I), but the use of yam-out for eat is a lexical feature foreign to English (Semple-McBean & Creighton, 2018; Semple-McBean, 2017).

Even without the different lexical features to English, understanding the numerous meanings of one word in Guyana Creolese is challenging. One word can have several



meanings in one village or community but have different meanings in another immediate, neighbouring village. This was challenging because the children in each school came from different villages with significant differences in meanings of common words and phrases. There were further differences between the meanings in the two participating schools. For example, at Saints Primary School, the Guyanese Creole word ‘mi belly full’ means *I am not hungry*. However, at Angel Primary School similarly it can mean *not hungry* but it also means that the speaker has had enough of a situation or a frustrating experience as well the speaker is not greedy or open to be fooled. These differences had to be considered when transcribing to ensure I was capturing the exact meaning of the words spoken by the participants.

### **3.13 Presentation and interpretation of data**

Concerning presentation and interpretation of qualitative data, Silverman (2011b) raises the following questions:

- How are data extracts presented?
- Is the detail of the transcription or the field notes appropriate to the claims being made?
- Are data extracts positioned within the local context from which they arose?
- Is any attempt made to establish that the data extracts selected are representative of the data as a whole? (p. 276)

For instance, are simple tabulations used, or are deviant cases followed up? This section aims to address Silverman’s questions.

#### ***3.13.1 Presenting cases***

Embedded in the preceding questions is the notion that researchers need to endeavour not to over-claim, need to be authentic, stay close to the evidence, and demonstrate how interpretations and findings are reached (Clarke, 2005, 2007, 2008; Clarke, Friesen & Washburn, 2018; Simons, 2009; Whisker, 2018). Attention needs to be paid to potential pitfalls such as anecdotalism, which may tempt researchers to focus on a few critical

examples, or emotionally appealing illustrations of some apparent phenomenon without attempting to analyse less clear or contradictory data (Silverman, 2011b: 20).

In the transcripts, I captured the emotional state of the participant being interviewed as well as other conditional elements of the statements and the participant. The notes given at the end of each interview extract provided additional information which were of importance to the analysis. The extract below illustrates how I practice this throughout the study.

### **Random Extract: Another Day with Cassy (SEND – Down Syndrome)**

Today I found Cassy wondering around the school as she would typically do. She appeared unhappy and bothered. She also seemed very distant.

**L L:** *Is something wrong Cassy?*

**Cassy:** *Cassy is sad. Cassy is sad because the children practising their play and Cassy do not have a part.*

**L L:** *Did you tell them you want a part?*

**Cassy:** *Yes but they say no part for Cassy to play*

**L L:** *I am sorry, but I am sure you can still help out.*

**Cassy:** *Cassy don't want help out. Cassy doesn't feel happy. Cassy is never wanted.*

**L L:** *I am sure you can watch the practice.*

**Cassy:** *Cassy don't want to watch at all. Cassy always have to watch. Cassy never get to do. It is not fair. This school is not fair. Nobody is fair. Mr Lashley is not fair.*

**L L:** *What did I do Cassy?*

**Cassy:** *Mr Lashley want Cassy to stay quiet and watch like other teachers.*

**L L:** *I am sorry Cassy. I did not intend that interpretation. I want you to be involved.*

**Cassy:** *Why you telling me to watch the practice then?*

**L L:** *Because it may be just as fun as being in the play.*

**Cassy:** *Mr Lashley unfair too. Watching and doing is not the same thing.*

**L L:** *How about you and I go and watch?*

**Cassy:** *Mr Lashley will go with Cassy*

**L L:** *Yes, I will.*

**Cassy:** *Ok I will watch with Mr Lashley.*

#### **Additional Notes at the end of Cassy's Transcript**

Cassy is powerless to influence her participation in the play rehearsals and those who have the power use discourse to prevent her participation. She feels denied the opportunity to socialise with her peers in mainstream school. She sees this unfair treatment as signalling her being unwanted by the teachers and children without SEND. She feels discourses on SEND have contested her attempts to use discourses to acquire power like children without SEND. She even expressed sadness as she felt my efforts to calm her in her agitated state were supportive of those who are implicated in her rejection and the suppression of her voice to deny her from participating. Cassy framed that her exclusion was an intentionally unfair practice to ensure she did not obtain power in society.

### **3.13.2 Triangulation**

Triangulation of data started as soon as data was available, and it was a continuous and rigorous process. Various maps were used to carry out situational analysis using the data in a cross-referenced way to validate the overall accounts and experiences. According to Mayer (2015), Mills et al., (2010) and Pohlmann & Colell (2017), the analytic goal in data analysis is to understand the situatedness and relations of actions and interactions with the children with SEND. In doing this, the situatedness of statements was triangulated with the conditions of the situations and the social inclusion experiences of the children with SEND and non-human elements.

The conditions, subjectivities and situatedness of the experiences of the children with SEND were evident from their discussions and were triangulated and analysed from multiple data sources including interviews with children, observations of children, and focus group discussions with teachers. Multiple methods were used for data collection from the various data sources because I recognised the complexity in situations and of human experiences.

Poststructuralists recognise that information collected can be only partial, situated in terms of time, place and the context of the specific situation and need to be triangulated from multiple sources embedded in the research site. Triangulating the data ensured

that I understood the experiences of the participants in a deeper way. Moreover, triangulation allows for the facilitation of more in-depth analysis of the discourses which provided explicit interpretations of the meanings derived from the mapping of the stated experiences of the children with SEND, using the three maps as posited by Clarke (2005) and Clarke et al. (2007, 2008, 2015, 2018).

### **3.14 Final Thoughts**

Ethnography is the research approach adopted in this study. This involved embedding myself in the two schools and the situations and experiences under study, which were sometimes challenging, emotional, and also personal. Nevertheless, it was very effective in revealing the voices and lived experiences of the children with SEND in the two participating schools and, by extension, is likely to be reflected in the experiences of other children in similar mainstream settings in Guyana. Further, the ethnographic research process engages the researcher in dialogue with the entire social reality encountered (see Berry, 201; Corte & Irwin, 2017; Rodgers, 2007). Through an ethnographic research process, I immersed myself in the research area and followed the data gathering protocols established from the project planning to completion stages. While this chapter has focused on methodological concerns, it has also involved a reflective component showing my situatedness throughout the data gathering journey in this research.

## **Chapter Four: Approach to Data Analysis**

### **4.0 Introduction**

The preceding chapter examined the methodological approach taken. This chapter focuses on data analysis through the development of situational and relational maps, analysis and interpretation. The focus of situational analysis is to unify methodology and theory as an advanced approach to conducting qualitative grounded theory research, which is reflexive, flexible and adaptive (see Clarke, Friese & Washburn, 2018; Whisker, 2018). The flexibility and adaptability of situational analysis facilitated analysing data in an open, comprehensive, rigorous, thorough and interpretive manner in this study. This chapter presents how I used situational analysis to understand the experiences of children with SEND through its theory/method approach to data analysis.

### **4.1 Development of Situational Maps**

We believe both engagements without domination and cooperation without consensus are becoming increasingly important as the transnationalisation of qualitative inquiry and most everything else continues (Clarke, Friese, & Washburn, 2015: 49).

We as individuals face three types of struggle in our life experiences. The first struggle is against forms of ethnic, social, and religious domination. My personal views, based on the social model of disability, collided with postcolonial Guyana's dominant individual deficit model of disability extant discourse. Guyana's dominant discourse is supported by its historical, religious, material and cultural traditions. My critical engagement with the first set of data revealed the domination and surveillance of the individual deficit thinking on disability. Additionally, the children with SEND identified with and categorised themselves as being the problem – that is, they enfolded themselves in a deficit model of disability.

### Situational Map 4.1: The struggles of children with SEND in mainstream schools

<b>Individual Human Elements/Actors</b> <i>Individual children</i> <i>Parents</i> <i>Teachers</i> <i>Religious Leaders</i>	<b>Non-Human Elements/Actants</b> <i>School</i> <i>Home</i> <i>Training college</i> <i>Church/Mosques/Temple</i> <i>Children's work</i>
<b>Collective Human Elements/Actors</b> <i>Teachers</i> <i>Parents</i> <i>Children without SEND</i>	<b>Implicated/Silent Actors/Actants</b> <i>Children with SEND</i> <i>Some Teacher perspective</i> <i>Children's voices</i> <i>Abused children</i>
<b>Discursive Constructions of Individual and/or Collective Human Actors</b> <i>Children with SEND as resource intensive</i> <i>Children with SEND as unable to achieve – unteachable</i> <i>Mainstream schools are unsuitable for children with SEND</i> <i>Label children with SEND by their impairment and not by their performance and work.</i> <i>Children with SEND must always be under surveillance.</i>	<b>Discursive Construction of Non-human Actants</b> <i>Standards Agenda – success judged through SATs</i> <i>Performativity – teachers judged through SATs</i> <i>Disability as deficit – medical model</i> <i>Domestic Abuse – not recognised as pervasive – lack of practice in this area</i> <i>Inclusion as detrimental to those who are not disabled</i>
<b>Political Economic Elements</b> <i>Funding for schools - insufficient</i> <i>Inclusion reforms</i> <i>Post-colonial context</i> <i>Teacher Training</i> <i>Poverty</i> <i>Natural resource rich country</i>	<b>Sociocultural/Symbolic Elements</b> <i>Different religious beliefs</i> <i>Different Ethnic group celebrations – and status of different groups</i> <i>Disability as curse – religious and traditional</i> <i>Patriarchy</i>
<b>Temporal Elements</b> <i>Seasons and work patterns – children pulled from school to work.</i> <i>Parents isolating disabled children because they want to keep their existence a secret.</i>	<b>Spatial Elements</b> <i>Location of different schools – serving different ethnic groups</i> <i>Incomers from different locations (Amera)</i>
<b>Major Issues/Debates usually contested</b> <i>Inclusion</i> <i>Racism</i> <i>Child Abuse in schools</i>	<b>Related discourses</b> <i>Culture</i>
<b>Other Kinds of Elements</b> <i>Social Practices in schools</i>	

The separation of the children with SEND from achievement and participation in school life was an apparent normalised custom. Children with SEND were told the limits to which they could achieve and participate in mainstream education. This established a form of exclusion because any valuable contributions made by children with SEND were not acknowledged and recognised as having the same significance as those of their peers without SEND. Children with SEND's challenges were used as forms of labelling and humiliation. Therefore, engagement with this first set of data led

to theoretical sampling in both schools around the struggles of children with SEND. These struggles of children with SEND are reflected in the maps presented below.

The final struggle is against that which bounds the individual to her or himself and results in the individual yielding to others in this way. It is struggle against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission (Foucault, 1983). During initial data analysis, it appeared that children with SEND did not struggle against forms of subjectivity which suggested and reinforced the idea that their limitations were their deficits. It appeared they had accepted such subjective forms and were bound by them; they seemed to submit willingly to the embodied subjectivities. The children with SEND's willingness to accept subjugation started my struggle against these forms of subjectivities that the children embraced. Also, I struggled to analyse the data because of my struggles with their embodied subjectivities which sometimes affected my reflexivity. There was a constant internal struggle situated in my embodied social model perspective on SEND and led to continual conflict with the dominant individual deficit model practices observed in the two schools.

The critical analytic goal of situational analysis is to understand the situatedness and relations of action and interaction in the phenomenon of interest (Mayer, 2015; Mills, et al., 2010; Pohlmann & Colell, 2017). The conditions, subjectivities and situatedness of the experiences of the children with SEND were in the experiences provided and were analysed as they existed. Everything in the situation makes and affects it while, at the same time, situations are also constructed and are unstable. The empirical world is constructed around situations, and situational analysis places both action and conditions inside the situation and demands analysis of the situation as a whole (Clarke, 2005; Pohlmann & Colell, 2017).

Situations are complex and are also particular configurations of conditions, temporal, geographical, interactional, sentimental and material. They are constructed through discourse (Foucault (1979, 1980). My analysis focused on understanding the discourses through which the participants formed their subjectivities. Foucault decentred the knowing subject to focus instead on the social as discursive practices and extant discourses as elements of practice that are constitutive of subjectivities (Clarke, 2005; Foucault, 1975). Drawing on a Foucauldian approach to the study of the experiences of children with SEND allowed me to establish a more in-depth analysis of the discourses

constitutive of subjectivities on offer in understanding the experiences of these children.

**Situational Map 4.2: Participation for Children with SEND in mainstream schools**

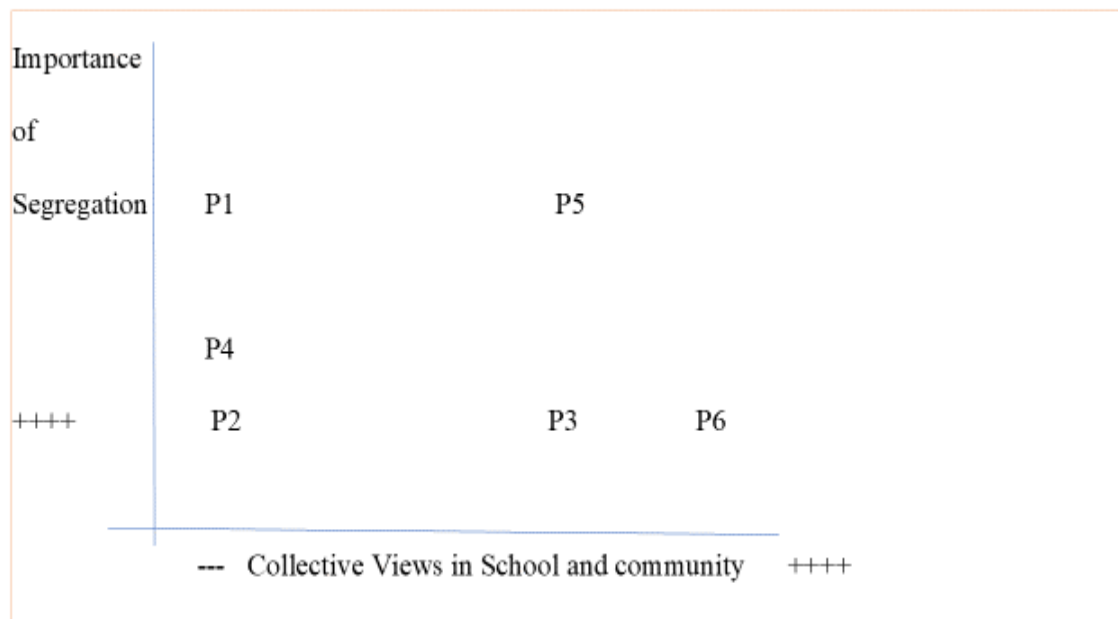
<b>Individual Human Elements/Actors</b>	<b>Non Human Elements/Actants</b>
<i>Individual children</i> <i>Parents</i> <i>Teachers</i> <i>Religious Leaders</i> <i>Head teachers</i> <i>Education Officers</i> <i>Government officials</i> <i>PTA executives</i> <i>School Cleaners</i>	<i>School</i> <i>Home</i> <i>Training college</i> <i>Church/Mosque/Temple</i> <i>Playground</i> <i>Canteens</i> <i>School Gate Shops</i> <i>Cemetery</i>
<b>Collective Human Elements/Actors</b>	<b>Implicated/Silent Actors/Actants</b>
<i>Teachers</i> <i>Parents</i> <i>Religious Organisations visiting schools</i> <i>Parent Teacher Association</i>	<i>Children with SEND</i> <i>Some Teacher perspectives</i> <i>Children's voices</i> <i>Abused children</i>
<b>Discursive Constructions of individual and/or collective Human Actors</b>	<b>Discursive Construction of non-human Actants</b>
<i>Tiered Level of acceptance in social setting controlled by children without SEND.</i> <i>Children with SEND as not supposed to achieved tier 4 level of socialisation (see Chapter Six)</i>	<i>Social Inclusion Practices and Policies established by the Ministry of Social Cohesion</i> <i>Government expectations from mainstream placement of children with SEND</i>
<b>Political Economic Elements</b>	<b>Sociocultural/Symbolic Elements</b>
<i>National Division in Parliament</i> <i>National Practices of Exclusion</i> <i>International Sanctions - Insufficient</i> <i>Achieving Sustainable Development Goals</i>	<i>Disability is deviant</i> <i>Segregation</i> <i>Cultural Hierarchical Structures</i>
<b>Temporal Elements</b>	<b>Spatial Elements</b>
<i>Family shaming in society because of impairments</i> <i>Caging disabled children highlighted on national news media.</i> <i>Bullying in schools</i>	<i>Variation in inclusion practices within school districts</i>
<b>Major Issues/Debates usually contested</b>	<b>Related discourses</b>
<i>Socialisation/Participation</i>	<i>Religion</i>
<b>Other Kinds of Elements</b>	
<i>Family resources</i>	

The foundational premise of discursive analysis presupposes that every human thought, perception or activity is influenced by the structuration of the field of signification which precedes the immediacy of the facts (Pohlmann & Colell, 2017; Rasiński, 2011). Any given situation is itself open, indeterminate, changing, unstable, unfixed, tenuous and temporary (Clarke, 2005). The tenuous and indeterminate nature of situation can be determined by situational analysis using social world/arena maps and positional maps (Clarke, 2005 & Clarke et al., 2007, 2008, 2015, 2018). The primary focus is not on facts but to their conditions of possibility (Clarke et al., 2015, 2018 & Laclau 1995 as



cited in Rasiński, 2011). I did not perceive the statements of the children with SEND as ‘the facts’ but rather as a way of arriving at an interpretive understanding of how they viewed their realities. Therefore, when children revealed their experiences, they were explored for the situatedness and subjectivities connected to other discourses and phenomena in their social world. The map below highlights the actors who are generally present in the social world of the two schools.

#### Positional Map 4.3 - Socially Expected Positions in Mainstream School



P1 = SEND is as a result of sin and therefore children with SEND should not be allowed to participate equally in the same mainstream schools as children without SEND (position held by some religious teachers and parents of children without SEND).

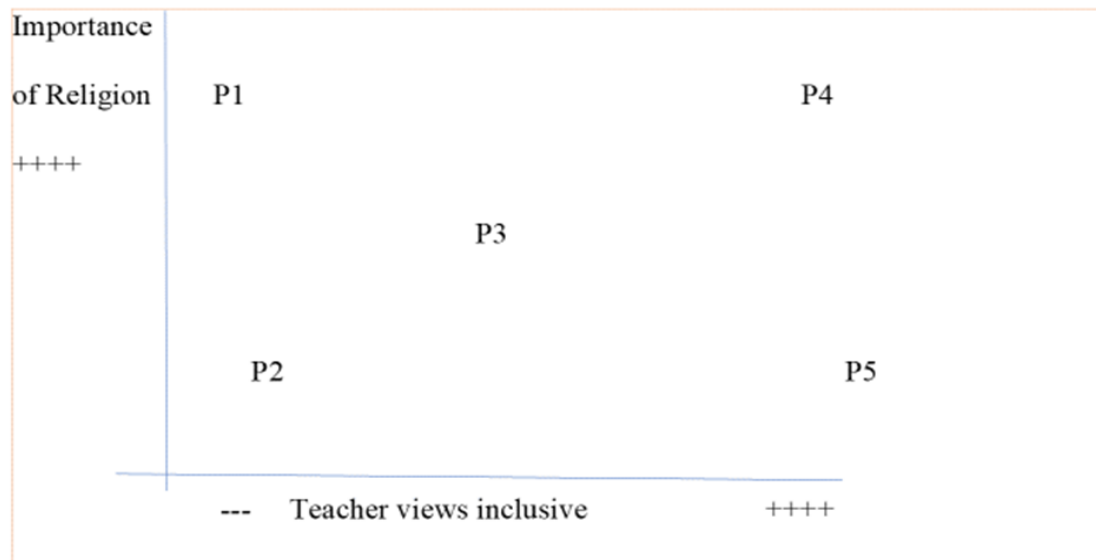
P2 = Children with SEND should be silenced in mainstream schools or ignored. Their perspectives are not worthy of consideration. They need to accept that (position held by some teachers and parents of children without SEND).

P3 = If children with SEND are allowed participation it must be controlled by those who has the right to mainstream schools (position held by some children without SEND e.g. Thomas).

- P4 = The benefits of mainstream education outweighs the depersonalisation, marginalisation and discrimination experiences (position held by parents, teachers and some children with and without SEND).
- P5 = Children with SEND must accept their subjugation (position held by some teachers).
- P6 = **Sustainable Development Goal 4** (SDG 4) aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” Therefore children with SEND should be fully accommodated and supported (position not held).

All the positions taken and not taken above are discursively formed in discourses. Poststructuralist theory regards subjectivity as constituted discursively. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the examination of the discursive systems in which it is involved, because they are seen to play an essential role in the constitution of the subject's identity (Laclau 1995 as cited in Rasiński, 2011; Pohlmann & Colell, 2017). I saw the participants as vessels of discursive realities and the key to understanding the meaning of their experiences and one aspect of the world in the discourse on SEND. As an embodied actor in the discursive systems of the social model of disability thinking on SEND, I helped to create the meanings which were established. This act in itself is subjective, because, as Clarke (2005) posited, researchers cannot give unmediated voices to the unheard from their perspectives. Further, she added that all reports are deeply mediated by the researcher. Considering this, I was careful and conscious of my personal biases and emotions as I analysed the data and compiled the report. Moreover, I presented the subjective positions considered and those not considered from the data and from the individuals in the situation including myself.

#### Positional Map 4.4: Major Positions Taken and Not Taken as seen from the data gathered



P1 = SEN is as a result of sin and therefore teachers don't think children can be taught at all

P2 = Not holding religious views but still not believing children with SEND can be taught – especially not in mainstream (position held by some teachers and parents of children without SEND).

P3 = **Middle of road** – yes maybe included but need lots of support – SEND is a tragedy possibly inflicted by God

P4 = God believes all children should be welcome and treated fairly and enjoy education in mainstream (position rarely taken)

P5 = Strongly inclusive – not believing especially in God (position does not exist)

I connected the discourse, the conditions and discursive systems in which the children with SEND participate that connected the realities of their experiences to other individuals in the same social arenas and positions. I analysed the facts dispersed in discourses as the sum of all the real statements (verbal or written). I also accepted the interpretation of the meaning they provide collectively and independently of each other as unit statements. Facts are empirical, material and embedded (Foucault 1968, 2005 as cited in Rasiński, 2011). In discourse, descriptions are developed and verified, and theories are developed. They form the precondition of what is later revealed and which then functions as an item of knowledge or an illusion, an accepted regime of truth or an

exposed error (Rasiński, 2011). In this manner, knowledge is thus understood as a group of elements, which are regularly formed by a discursive practice. It does not only include demonstrations but also fictions, reflections, relations, institutional regulations and political decisions (Foucault 1968, 2005 as cited in Rasiński, 2011).

In their discourse with participants, researchers need to be aware of their influences on the statements made by participants (Parkes, et al., 2010; Pohlmann & Colell, 2017; Rasiński, 2011). For example, during the research, I became aware that some children perceived me as an ally and this removed limitations on what they shared with me. Being seen as an ally was also temporary, unstable and changeable. These changes in social relations between myself and participants were situated in subjectivities. Also, they influenced the connections I saw when I carried out relational analyses. It was my influences on the discussion on SEND and power perceived by the participants, which chartered a new situation in the experiences of the children with SEND. I made the children aware of the influences of their statements through discussing their statements with them. I sought the meanings of their verbal expressions as these were needed for relational analyses.

Interpretive understanding of children, their teachers and others involved, for example, parents are shared subjectively in their environment (Bischoping & Gazso, 2016; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Livholts & Timbuktu, 2015; MacLure, 2012; Mills, Chapman, Bonner, & Francis, 2007). This reflects the multiplicity of perspectives and subjectivities about the placement and experiences of children with SEND in mainstream primary schools. I ascertained this interpretive understanding of meanings through grouping participants' observations by common situations/experiences and analysing the commonalities in the experiences as well as the differences. I coded the transcribed interviews for easy identification, analysis, and I identified themes to reveal the voices of the children with SEND from the various positions from which they were shared.

The example below is an illustration from Saints and Angel Primary school. It shows the actual process I employed to achieve an interpretative understanding of what the children personally shared as part of their social worlds.

## 4.2 Data Analysis - Angel Primary School

### Ravi

**Statement:** *Everybody is unfair.*

**Time:** Morning session of the day

**Atmosphere:** The class was doing Mathematics and many children with SEND like their peers without SEND had incomplete assignments.

**Other Social Actions:** The class teacher verbally reprimanded the children with SEND individually. The children without SEND did not receive the same individual reprimand.

### Latchman

**Statement:** *The teacha busin me out and Dem chilren laugh me bad [The teacher curses me and the children laugh a lot at me]*

**Time:** Morning session of the day

**Atmosphere:** Latchman received a verbal reprimand accompanied with corporal punishment for failing to complete a learning experience.

**Other Social Actions:** The children without SEND laughed at Latchman.

### Amanda

**Statement:** *I feel pain bad pain in my heart. Sometimes I want to die. I may just kill myself, but then It won't help me. Will it?*

**Time:** Afternoon session of the day

**Atmosphere:** Teachers were busy with month end records and students were given extended activity sheets to complete.

**Other Social Actions:** No significant event or incident

### Shantie

**Statement:** *Rejected at home because my mom and dad died. Rejected at school because of disability and I guess I will be rejected in life.*

**Time:** Morning session of the day

**Atmosphere:** Shantie was teased by children without SEND before the morning assembly. Uneasy school day

**Other Social Actions:** She reported being teased to the teachers. They told her to ‘toughen up’ and ignored her after.

## **Pam**

**Statement:** *The teachers make me feel useless and incapable.’ ‘I am disabled, and I cannot walk. So I am expected to accept my limitations and stay in my lane.*

**Time:** Morning session of the day

**Atmosphere:** Pam volunteered to take on some classroom responsibilities and was denied the opportunity by the class teacher. The teacher told Pam it will be fatiguing for her.

**Other Social Actions:** Pam’s father arrived late to assist her down the stairs for the morning recess. No one volunteered to assist her. She stayed in class all by herself.

I interviewed most of the children in the morning session of the school day. I connected the atmosphere and other social occurrences with the statements the children made during the interviews. Further, the statement themselves were all interconnected. Their expressions were that the children felt unfairly treated and marginalised. The statements of the children were placed individually and parallel to the statements of other children with SEND in order to highlight vital points. For example, **Ravi**, a child with SEND, exclaimed ‘*This school! The teachers, the children everybody is unfair.*’ This statement is situated and connected to multiple phenomena in the mainstream school. The day this statement was made, many children including children with SEND had been disciplined (corporal punishment – three lashes with a cane) during the morning assembly for various unacceptable/challenging behaviours. In addition, the children with SEND in Ravi’s class were further disciplined for incomplete work.

The focus of the interpretation went beyond listening to or knowing about the statement to understanding the meaning of the statement, its interpretation for Ravi and

all others involved in the context. I first mapped the statement to connecting occurrences like time, location, stimulation, simultaneously occurring phenomena, the relation of the statement to the children who said it and other statements being spoken by children with SEND. I asked Ravi why he felt that *'everybody is unfair'*. To fully achieve a deep interpretive understanding, I needed to connect this statement to the antecedent events and situations and also reflected upon what the theoretical lens says about such. I did not do this reflection in isolation. I repeated the process with every individual interview transcript and then again after I had established themes from the interview transcripts.

In examining other statements, **Latchman** said, *The teacha busin me out. She cursed me out and tells me how me stink up the place. She did not have to do that in front of all dem chilren. Dem chilren laugh me bad. [The teacher curses me. She cursed me and told me that I make the place smell bad. She did not have to insult me in the presence of other children. They laughed at me.]* This statement also originated from events in the school and his experiences. Similar to Ravi, it echoes sentiments about unfair treatment of those who are powerless. Latchman indicated that the teacher's insulting remarks made him feel powerless because it was done in the presence of all the children who laughed. For Latchman, this indicates that everybody is being unfair. This event shows a mapped connection with two separate statements in the same school thus facilitating an interpretive understanding of these statements. However, this was not the final point of analysis as I returned to these whenever another connection was created, going further into the data and deepening the interpretation.

This process continued at the end of each day in the field. For example, **Amanda** stated, *I feel pain bad pain in my heart. Sometimes I want to die. I may kill myself, but then it won't help me. Will it?* Amanda's statement suggests emotional pain which can be connected to Latchman's emotional pain from public humiliation and loss of power constituting a shared emotional pain. The contrast is that Latchman appeared resilient to the pain while Amanda considered self-harming in response as her suicidal thoughts seem to be caused by the unfair treatment she received in the school. Hence a link connects all these children with different experiences and different impairments.

**Shantie**, another child while crying in frustration exclaimed, *Rejected at home because my mom and dad died! Rejected at school because of disability and I guess I will be*

*rejected in life!* The social model of disability, which guided this study, is premised on Loreman's Framework, and Booth and Ainscow's (2002, 2011) and both state that all children need to be welcomed in their neighbourhood school. Shantie's statement *Rejected at home, school and in life* indicated that she is subjugated as unwelcome in her neighbourhood school. It also provided a base to open up a discussion of the social model of disability in Shantie's school. *Rejected at home, school and in life* can be mapped to *everybody is unfair* and *I feel pain bad pain in my heart*. This further extends my unit of analysis and shows the situatedness of one statement which is nested in other statements. Analysing these statements with situational analysis through a poststructuralist lens revealed the complexity in the situations (Foucault (1979, 1980), which accounted for the statements made by the children. Also, it shows discourses informed by the individual deficit model of disability which is constitutive of marginalisation of children with SEND as a normalised phenomenon.

**Pam**, who was always cheerful stated, *The teachers make me feel useless and incapable. I am disabled, and I cannot walk. So I am expected to accept my limitations and stay in my lane*. It was the mapping of Pam's statement which framed the formation of my first theme, '**Being Ignored**', a category to which four other children were later added. Pam stated that the teachers expect her to accept her limitations and stay in her lane (see chapter six). However, this leads to the question as to whose power demarcated her lane and how lanes for children with SEND are demarcated in mainstream schools. Pam's statement of feeling unvalued and powerless is situated in and determined by the actions within the mainstream school. Her statement is connected to Ravi's, Latchman's, Amanda's and Shantie's as they all either feel rejected and are expected to accept their limitations. This analysis solidified my first theme and it widened my area of observation and initiated the coded grouping of transcripts. Most importantly it guided further theoretical sampling and feeder memoing.

Further, I coded the transcripts of Pam, Ravi, Latchman, Amanda and Shantie and grouped them under the theme '**Being Ignored**'. I also placed the data in a table form to facilitate a more comprehensive analysis. Additionally, I included other situated characteristics of the individual child into the analysis. Then I started connecting the literature with the themes for deeper memoing to theorise the situated meanings established. Theory sampling and memoing help researchers to support themes in analysis without constituting a theory per se (Clarke, Friese & Washburn, 2018;



Whisker, 2018). This approach helped me to establish a sensitising concept about the experiences of children with SEND.

**Table 4 A: The Coded group of Being Ignored at Angel Primary school**

Units of Analysis	Children				
	Shantie	Ravi	Amanda	Latchman	Pam
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Grade</b>	6	5	5	6	4
<b>Ethnicity</b>	East Indian	East Indian	African	East Indian	African
<b>Disability/ Impairment</b>	Learning Disabilities	Learning Disabilities	Down Syndrome	Learning Disabilities	1. Epilepsy 2. Partial Paralysis
<b>Brief History</b>	Mom murdered by Dad who committed suicide. Lives in impoverished conditions	Fisherman's son. Lives in impoverished conditions	Lives in a very traditional religious community which sees her impairment as an omen.	The son of a poor seasonal (eschalot) farmer. Lives in impoverished conditions	Parents blame themselves for her impairments because they resulted from a car accident.
<b>Critical observation on the similarities and differences in the children's experiences</b>	1. Directly ignored at school. 2. Appears depressed. 3. Shows willingness to learn. 4. Isolated	1. Has a private tutor. 2. Ravi feels he is a failure and a disappointment. 4. Isolated	1. Children in the school tell her that her parents sold her for riches 2. Isolated	Despite his learning disability he counts money mentally without error and does mental estimations Isolated.	1. Pam attempts to do all the learning tasks. 2. Teachers avoid challenging her. Isolated

The analysis of the group 'Ignored children' above shows details of children with SEND at Angel school who are characteristically isolated, leading to the designation of the group as 'Being Ignored'. It also shows that being ignored because of SEND cut across a range of other demographic variables such as gender, grade, ethnicity, impairments and history or background. It seems fair to suggest that ignoring children with SEND appeared to be an accepted normalised practice supported by the dominant SEND discourse (see chapter five and six). The identification of this theme of discrimination experienced by children with SEND through isolation helped me to contextualise and apply the two social model frameworks used in the theoretical framework I developed for the study. I also realised that while all the children in this first coded group were isolated, their isolation was not connected further than their

disability. This meant they could not exclusively remain under the theme 'Being Ignored'.

The process of identifying themes and coding groups continued with the second group which was formed from data collected at Angel Primary School. This group remained without a coded name for a while. Another example is provided below from Saints Primary School, which illustrates the actual process I employed to achieve an interpretative understanding of what the children shared about their experiences and feelings about these experiences.

### 4.3 Data Analysis - Saints Primary School

#### Macy

**Statement:** *I know that is not right for teachers to treat children the way my teacher treated me today and every other day that she talk me down or ignore me. I hate the witch. She is the wicked witch of Oz.*

**Time:** Morning session of the day

**Atmosphere:** Macy's handwriting was criticised by her peers without SEND after the teacher said that some child needs to go back to kindergarten and learn to write properly.

**Other Social Actions:** Later in the day, the teacher threw Macy book at her and refused to mark it.

#### Belie

**Statement:** *I do not want to stay here. I want my dad. These children hate me. The teacher only pressures me. So she hates me too. I am going to fail again, and Failure Belie for sure again. Why daddy had to go away again.*

**Time:** Morning session of the day

**Atmosphere:** Belie was placed in the streamed 'A' class and she kept failing all the practise assessments. She was fearful of the assessment scheduled for the afternoon session.

**Other Social Actions:** The class teacher told Belie in the presence of everyone that she could fail another assessment in her class.

### **Alicia**

**Statement:** *This school is a limiting place. If it were not for the Grade six teachers this place would be boring.*

**Time:** Afternoon session of the day

**Atmosphere:** Parallel classes were merged as four teachers were absent.

**Other Social Actions:** I observed Alicia's teacher angrily remove her from Grade six and take her back to Grade three.

### **Junior Bob**

**Statement:** *Mi can't read, mi can't write propa. Mi neva pass them maths test, and mi hear mi grade four teacha say she nah waste time behind me. Mi nah like she. She bad mind Bad! Bad! [I can neither read nor write properly. I had never passed any Mathematics test and I overheard my grade four teacher saying she will not waster her on me. I do not like her. She is very evil.]*

**Time:** Morning session of the day

**Atmosphere:** The teacher gave the class a speech before she started teaching. She warned the children with SEND not to stress her out today.

**Other Social Actions:** Junior Bob's mother was at school helping with a PTA activity.

### **Joseph**

**Statement:** *I ain't care none. I do what I like. I ain't afraid of neither the teachers nor anybody in the village. I can do what I want, and everybody is afraid to do me anything. [I do not care about anything. I do what I like. I am not afraid of either the teachers or anybody in the village. I can do what I want, and everybody is afraid to do anything to me.]*

**Time:** Afternoon session of the day

**Atmosphere:** A police officer visited the school and spoke about accepted behaviours in society.

**Other Social Actions:** The head teacher selected some children who are known to exhibit challenging behaviours to be spoken to individually by the police officer.

The connection between the comments at both schools made it more apparent that the teachers were embedded in society's negative discourse about SEND and they were a common theme running through the children's statements because they were the dominant actors in mainstream schools. The statements are also connected in that the children felt unfairly treated and marginalised without knowing whose discourses influence the power, resources and support teachers received. The children were unaware of how other actors like the government through its policies frame the teachers' actions.

A second consideration of the maps seems to suggest that children with SEND at Saints were unaware of the source of the power and only focused on the consequences. They seemed to always expect negative consequences from those who had obtained power in the school. The second consideration opened up my thinking about the theme and distorted the previous categorisation. I returned to examine my original messy maps, and, as a result of further analysis, I called the new categorisation 'the marginalised children'. Later recategorising led to further reformulation as new categories were established. I returned to my feeder memos and develop some relational memos. I extended the situation map using a table similar to the one used for Angel Primary School and added other critical data. Again, this analysis was not the final analysis as numerous additions and recategorising occurred throughout the study until saturation in data analysis was achieved.

The personal holds relevance to analysis which rests upon the embodied experiences and discursive formations of subjectivity (Foucault 1982). I tried to stay conscious of my own embodied subjectivities in establishing interpretive understanding and attributing meanings to the statements made by children with SEND. At times, I was in favour of children with SEND and reflexivity helped me to understand that I had acted negatively despite my intentions and motives being positive (see Table 3.3 in chapter

three). I was in favour of my thinking regarding the social model of disability and viewed it as better than the dominant individual deficit model in Guyana.

Although Table 4B, showing the theme of **‘Experiences of Marginalisation’** showed mapped relations to Table 4A, **‘Being Ignored’**, it also gave rise to a new theme titled **‘Children with Multiple Exceptionalities’**. These children shared some of the experiences as the other children under the theme experiences of marginalisation. However, children such as Alicia and Belie (Table 4B) were not marginalised because of impairments but because they challenged the mainstream expectation of children without impairments at their respective ages. Their behaviours were perceived as signs of indiscipline and practices of resistance to the standardised expectation. Their behaviours were also framed as efforts to acquire more power than was available to the children without SEND.

Having derived a new theme, I referred back to my first coded group, (Table 4A) **‘Being Ignored’**. I reanalysed the list to ascertain if any child in this list needed to be reassigned under the new theme of **‘Children with Multiple Exceptionalities’**. I then realised Pam no longer fitted well under the ignored theme. Her experiences, however, gave rise to a third coded theme titled **‘Marginalised by Social Inequalities’**. Again, the area of analysis and observation extended through further theoretical sampling. I realised that the map of experiences had a few gaps which I had not previously observed. I started to see ethnicity and religion now emerging as a theme. I again examined the list of children with SEND from both schools who were to be interviewed and selected those who were of different religious and cultural orientation within the dominant culture of each school. The second examination of the maps gave rise to the fourth theme **‘Religious and Cultural Interferences’**. Mapping Religious and Cultural Interferences was challenging because religious discrimination was a sensitive issue at both schools. The individual analysis of each interview transcript was reviewed as I looked for religious and cultural interference on the experiences of children with SEND.

**Table 4 B: The Coded group Experiences of Marginalised at Saints Primary school**

Units of Analysis	Children				
	Macy	Belie	Alicia	Junior Bob	Joseph
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male
<b>Grade</b>	6	6	3	5	5
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Mixed Race	East Indian	African	African	African
<b>Disability/ Impairment</b>	Learning Disabilities.	Gifted - Exceptionally brilliant. Left Behind Child of a migrant parent.	Gifted - Exceptionally brilliant.	Dyslexia Dyscalculia Developmental Delays Challenging Behaviours. EBD	Intellectual Disabilities Challenging Behaviours
<b>Brief History</b>	Macy comes from a wealthy family. However, she has failed every assessment from year 1-5	After failing in Grade 1-3 Belie transformed in Grade 4 and is now a top performer in her Grade 6 class. She is experiencing anxiety that she will fail because of the pressure	She has had conflicts with the teachers who think she is rude. She challenges her teachers and many of them directly ignore her.	Junior Bob is labelled a failure; All Bobs are failures. It is the history known in the community.	Joseph lives with his single-parent mother and three older sisters. He has joined a gang of boys in the community who do not attend school.
<b>Critical observation on the similarities and differences in the children's experiences</b>	1. Condemned to fail. 2. Willing to learn. 3. Isolated	1. She is experiencing anxiety that she will fail again. Isolated	1. She is functioning at Grade Six level. 2. She finds her age peers childish. Socially accepted in Grade 6	1. Junior Bob was an ignored child in the school. 2. Isolated 3. Ignored 4. He wanted to participate in learning experiences.	1. Condemned in the school. 2. Ignored by teachers. 3. Isolated 4. Does not participate in learning experiences. 4. Bullied and is a bully. 5. Does not demonstrate respect for rules and authority in school.

After further regrouping, a fifth theme emerged. This theme was **‘Experiences of Domestic Violence and Abuse’**. I did an in-depth situational and positional mapping followed by a series of relational analyses wondering how I had missed this theme in the comprehensive analysis done thus far. I reviewed the initial stage of my research and examined the observation notes and transcripts and the overlooked theme became clearer. The relational map shown below illustrates this theme.

## **Relations among the Experiences of Domestic Violence and Abuse in this study**

### **Arif and Arifa**

**Abuse:** Domestic Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Neglect

**Experience in School:** Isolation, Bullied, Neglected, Unsupported

**Reaction:** Considered Suicide

**Perpetrator:** Family Member – Parents - Father

### **Marcy the Sexually Abused Victim**

**Abuse:** Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Neglect

**Experience in School:** Isolation, Bullied, Neglected, Unsupported

**Reaction:** Suppressed emotions, Developed weaknesses

**Perpetrator:** Member of community

### **He made me untouchable and nasty (Tricia)**

**Abuse:** Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Neglect

**Experience in School:** Isolation, Bullied, Neglected, Unsupported

**Reaction:** Considered Suicide,

**Perpetrator:** Member of community

### **Let him run if wants, Nial's Case of Fear**

**Abuse:** Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Neglect

**Experience in School:** Isolation, Bullied, Neglected, Unsupported

**Reaction:** Considered running away; runs out of class when scared

**Perpetrator:** Family Member – Father

### **The Cases of Shantie and Pooran**

**Abuse:** Domestic Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Neglect, Abandonment, Torture

**Experience in School:** Isolation, Bullied, Neglected, Unsupported

**Reaction:** Considered Suicide

**Perpetrator:** Family Member – Parents – Father

The relational map shows the connections between the children with SEND who had experienced domestic violence or some form of abuse. The analysis revealed that all the children who suffered domestic violence or abuse were subjected to isolation in school as well. Most of them were bullied and the underlying causes of their reaction in schools were not associated to experiencing violence and abuse but rather to their impairment. These subjective phenomena were common across the two schools, gender, ethnicity and age. This relational connectedness led to a reappraisal of the relations by categories, which resulted in the table below.

**Table 4 C: The Coded groups according to themes and children**

Expressing Opposition	Being Ignored	Marginalised by Social Inequalities	Religious and Cultural Interferences	Children with Multiple Exceptionalities	Experiences of Domestic Violence and Abuse
Ceon	Junior Bob	Cassy	Rawl	Aquennie	Tricia
Joel	Belie	Amera	Prem	Quan	Arif and Arifa
Thomas	Macy	Ravi	Besham	Devi	Marcy
Tom	Akeen	Latchman	Amanda	Jasmine	Nial
	Joseph	Rosemary	Sabrina	Alicia	Shantie
	Jonese	Bobby	Holly	Daniel	Pooran
		Boyo		Akon	
		Roshanie			
		Pam			

The children in each category do not fit that category exclusively. Some children's experiences could fit multiple themes. After I had reanalysed the analysis table each case, using the theme and the children's interview transcript once more, and I became frustrated again. I wondered how I could reveal these experiences under the most appropriate themes. I left it for a few days and tried to ignore it altogether but since I kept reflecting on the statements, their connectedness and meanings, I could not ignore it altogether. I tussled with the subjectivation of SEND as only situated in individual deficits. I confronted this struggle when I reengaged with the data. Confronting my struggles when engaging with data was supported by Allan's (2010) thinking that discursive practices operate around the individuals experiencing the marginalisation.



Further, Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) and Hammersley (2013) note that as the research progresses the researcher needs to re-negotiate dilemmas in data and analysis. I had to converse with the data as if the participants were there with me; an interactive discourse with the written and me. I then returned my focus on situational maps. I redid a series of the maps in order to go deeper into the category theme, which resulted in the new theme ‘Expressing Opposition’.

#### Situational Map 4.5: Children with SEND Expressing Opposition

<b>Individual Human Elements/Actors</b>	<b>Non human Elements/Actants</b>
<i>Individual children</i> <i>Teachers</i> <i>Head teachers</i>	<i>School</i> <i>Sports Equipment e.g. cricket ball</i> <i>External Lavatory Facilities</i> <i>Shared school compound</i>
<b>Collective Human Elements/Actors</b>	<b>Implicated/Silent Actors/Actants</b>
<i>Teachers</i> <i>Children</i>	<i>Children with SEND</i> <i>Some Teacher perspective</i> <i>Children’s voices</i> <i>Subjugated children</i> <i>Children with challenging behaviours</i>
<b>Discursive Constructions of individual and/or collective Human Actors</b>	<b>Discursive Construction of non-human Elements</b>
<i>Teachers are the authority in mainstream schools and should not be challenged by anyone especially children with challenging behaviours and those with SEND</i>	<i>Standards Agenda – success judged through Social Expectations/Maxims</i> <i>School Standard Operational Procedures</i> <i>Teachers’ Desk Manual</i> <i>School Rules</i>
<b>Political economic Elements</b>	<b>Sociocultural/Symbolic Elements</b>
<i>Placement of children with SEND must be done since it is funded by international funding agencies.</i>	<i>Children with challenging behaviours are equated to ‘Bad Children’</i>
<b>Temporal Elements</b>	<b>Spatial Elements</b>
<i>Children with SEN/ D committing acts of resistance.</i>	<i>Teachers who are not parents have their femininity are attacked.</i>
<b>Major Issues/Debates usually contested</b>	<b>Related discourses</b>
<i>Inclusion</i> <i>School policies which are discriminatory</i> <i>Practices of Resistances</i>	<i>Social Cohesion</i>
<b>Other Kinds of Elements</b>	
<i>Segregation between teachers and children</i>	

The map triggered deeper reflection as I felt I had missed something in the data and this led to further reanalysis of the maps.

### Positional Map 4.6: Being Ignored

Justification of Teachers' Actions++++	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
-----	Teacher views on children with SEND				++++

P1 = Teachers' are justified in their condemnation of disabled children and being ignored is not a form of exclusion (position held by teachers and children without SEND).

P2 = Children with SEND are failures (position held by teachers).

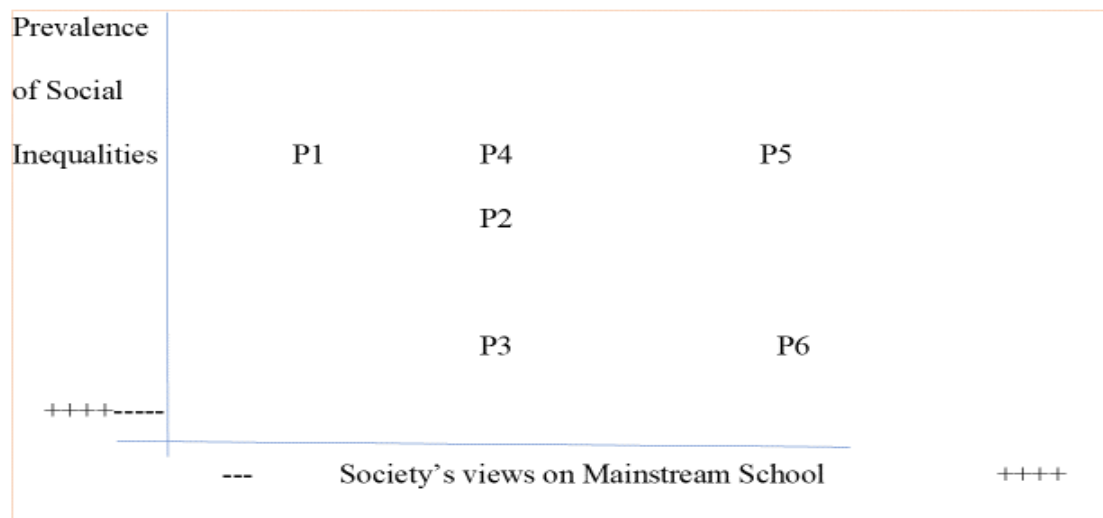
P3 = **Middle of road** – Children with SEND are unable to pass external examination and are valueless to the school ranking (position held by teachers).

P4 = Children with SEND are annoying and open condemnation is accepted (position held by teachers).

P5 = Children with SEND are burdens on school resources (position held by teachers and children without SEND).

Most of the children being ignored in both schools live in impoverished conditions. Further theoretical sampling showed that other children being ignored were from lower socioeconomic status families, and some of the factors leading to them being ignored are related to their lack of resources (see chapter five).

### Positional Map 4.7: Marginalised by Social Inequalities



- P1 = Children with SEND who come from impoverished backgrounds are more challenging than other categories (position held by teachers and some parents).
- P2 = Children with SEND participation should always be subjected to surveillance (position held by teachers and children without SEND).
- P3 = Poverty is a sin and produces impairments (position held by teachers and parents).
- P4 = Indigenous and exotic cultures should remain isolated in the jungles of Guyana (position held by some teachers).
- P5 = Some cultures are worthy for inclusion in curricula materials but not actively included in mainstream social practices (position held by some teachers).
- P6 = Children of certain cultures and socioeconomic background are destined failures and only frustrate mainstream teachers (position held by some teachers and some parents).

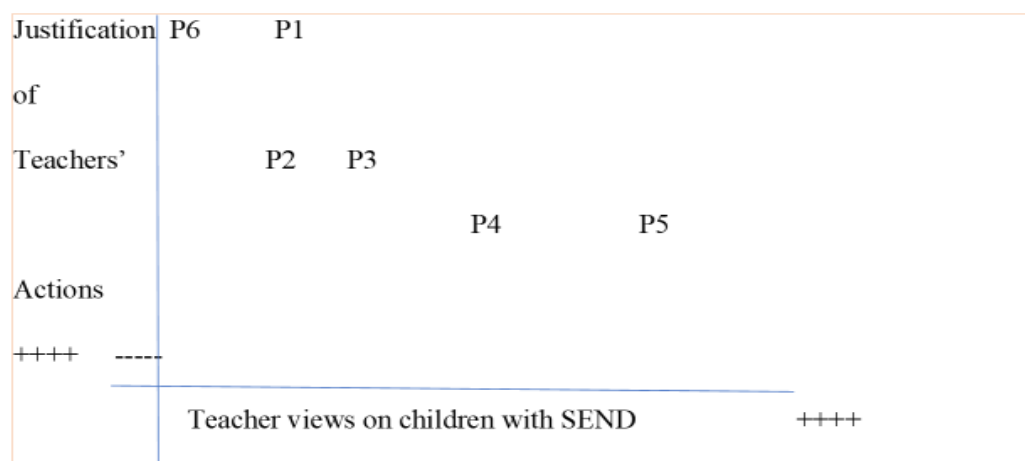
Some children in the Marginalised by Social Inequalities did not have impairments. For example Amera (see chapter five). On one hand some children of the Marginalised by Social Inequalities share the same impoverished background as the group Being Ignored. On the other hand, a significant number of these children come from working class families and many receive excellent family support. Their families support the schools as well. Some of these children have challenges like language and cultural challenges. The reactions to their placements in the mainstream highlighted structural and social inequalities in the schools and the country.

## Situational Map 4.8: Racial, Religious and Cultural Interferences

<b>Individual Human Elements/Actors</b> <i>Individual children</i> <i>Teachers</i> <i>Religious Leaders (Pandits, Imams, Pastors)</i>	<b>Non Human Elements/Actants</b> <i>Bible</i> <i>Geeta</i> <i>Quran (religious books)</i> <i>Church/Temple/Mosque</i>
<b>Collective Human Elements/Actors</b> <i>Teachers</i> <i>Children</i> <i>Parents</i>	<b>Implicated/Silent Actors/Actants</b> <i>Children with SEND</i> <i>Teachers</i> <i>Some parents</i>
<b>Discursive Constructions of individual and/or collective Human Actors</b> <i>Some impairments are the consequences of sin.</i> <i>Others are results of family curses, omen and Obeah.</i> <i>Mainstream schools were not build for disabled children.</i>	<b>Discursive Construction of non-human Actants</b> <i>Religious Freedom – People’s Constitution of Guyana, 1980.</i> <i>Guyana Disability Act, 2010</i> <i>Guyana Education Act, Chapter 39:01</i>
<b>Political economic Elements</b> <i>Separate state influence from religious influence in mainstream education.</i>	<b>Sociocultural/Symbolic Elements</b> <i>Most schools in Guyana were historical church funded and some are still under church influence.</i> <i>Many schools share a compound with a church or has a church immediately close by.</i>
<b>Temporal Elements</b> <i>Children in schools are encouraged to form and join religious groups.</i>	<b>Spatial Elements</b> <i>Multiple religious perspectives are present in one mainstream school and are all challenged by the dominant religion - Christianity.</i>
<b>Major Issues/Debates usually contested</b> <i>Exclusion by religious perspectives.</i>	<b>Related discourses</b> <i>Christian prayers are being repeated in all primary schools four times daily excluding the prayers of other religions.</i>
<b>Other Kinds of Elements</b> <i>There is division among the perspectives of the Christian groups and the division also fuel exclusion.</i>	

The map triggered deeper reflection as I felt I had missed something in the data and this led to further reanalysis of the maps especially the positional map below.

## Positional Map 4.9: Racial, Religious and Cultural Interferences



- P1 = All impairments are spiritual curses, family sins and omens, or the results of Obeah (position held by religious individuals and groups, teachers, parents and children).
- P2 = Religion and Ethnicity cause equal challenges from the resulting barriers they create in mainstream schools (position held by some teachers and children with SEND).
- P3 = Some teachers help to exacerbate racial, religious and cultural stereotyping of SEND (position held by some religious individuals, teachers and parents).
- P4 = Teachers are allowed to have preferences since God has his preferences (position held by religious individuals and groups and some children without SEND).
- P5 = Children with SEND must fear the consequences of their impairments (position held by religious individuals and groups, some teachers and some children without SEND).
- P6 = Religious views, opinions and perspectives are superior to every other perspectives (position held by religious individuals and groups, some teachers, some parents and many children with and without SEND).

Religious and Cultural influences are dominant in the local school communities and the discourse of the individual deficit model of disability, which is also spread through traditional religion. As was presented in previous chapters, especially chapter one, traditional religions in Guyana preach that impairment is an omen, a sin and more exacerbating an evil that resides in the individual with impairment. My religious subjectivities questioned the data which suggest this resident evil is inherited because of family curses or persistent wrong doing. I searched the data to understand why the impairment is God's will, a necessary punishment to warn the families of their sinful practices.

**Positional Map 4.10: The Children with Multiple Exceptionalities**

Achievement Lanes						
Low			Middle			
With Multiple Exceptionalities	Mainstream school is boring and unstimulating e.g. Alicia	Contradictory position – to achieve once you have impairments. The impairment overshadow any exceptionality e.g. Daniel	These children are used to represent the school at competitions but are mostly socially isolated. They are often ignored by teachers or classified as being challenging e.g., Alicia and Devi.			
		No available position for student with SEND				
Without Multiple Exceptionalities	Best position to fall because most support is given by teachers and the structure of the curriculum.		Most resources provided to the schools are suited for this group hence excluding some children.			The higher achievers are considered ‘Good learners’ and are celebrated.

Blue indicates the lanes unavailable for children with SEND. In Guyana, children with multiple exceptionalities adopt contrary positions within the discourse of ‘ideal’ children for mainstream schools. These children also struggle with their experiences and participation in mainstream school. However, they are high achievers yet classified as having challenging behaviours. In the two schools, children with multiple exceptionalities were not considered to have SEND in the traditionally perceived way in Guyana because they do not have impairments or learning disabilities. The teachers saw multiple exceptionalities as barriers not opportunities and indicated that organising experiences for them is also challenging. The teachers also indicated that the challenges created also highlighted the limitations in resources in the two schools. These children are seen as ‘difficult’ by teachers because they have challenged the standardised expectation of children without impairment in mainstream schools.

## Situational Map 4.11: Domestic Violence and Abused Children

<b>Individual Human Elements/Actors</b> <i>Individual children</i> <i>Teachers</i> <i>Religious Leaders (Pandits, Imams, Pastors)</i> <i>Parents</i> <i>Law Enforcement Officers</i>	<b>Non Human Elements/Actants</b> <i>Neighbourhoods social spots</i> <i>Churches/Temples/Mosques</i> <i>Non Governmental organisations</i> <i>Courts</i>
<b>Collective Human Elements/Actors</b> <i>Teachers</i> <i>Children</i> <i>Parents</i> <i>Community Members</i> <i>Law Enforcement Officers</i> <i>Social Workers</i>	<b>Implicated/Silent Actors/Actants</b> <i>Parents</i> <i>Children without SEND e.g. Thomas</i> <i>Teachers e.g. Mr. Rohit</i>
<b>Discursive Constructions of Individual and/or Collective Human Actors</b> <i>Domestic violence in Guyana is widespread and crosses racial and socioeconomic lines.</i> <i>Suicide is prevalent in Guyana</i> <i>Suicide is classified as an unforgivable sin.</i>	<b>Discursive Construction of Non-Human Actants</b> <i>Peoples' Constitution Guyana, Chapter 11:09 – Domestic Violence Act, Amended 1996</i> <i>Guyana- Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2006, 2019.</i>
<b>Political Economic Elements</b> <i>When children with impairment lose a parent to domestic violence they are further excluded e.g. Shantie and Pooran.</i>	<b>Sociocultural/Symbolic Elements</b> <i>Domestic Violence, Abuse and Suicide in a family are seen as bad Omen.</i>
<b>Temporal Elements</b> <i>Children with and without SEND have attempted and committed suicide after experiencing abuse and domestic violence.</i>	<b>Spatial Elements</b> <i>Religious group shuns persons who have attempted suicide inclusive of children with SEND rather providing support.</i>
<b>Major Issues/Debates usually contested</b> <i>Abuse of children with SEND in schools e.g. Bullying of Tom by Thomas</i>	<b>Related Discourses</b> <i>Racial discrimination and passive aggressive behaviours in schools.</i>
<b>Other Kinds of Elements</b> <i>Teachers being aware of abuse and ignore the victims even if they are children in their classes.</i>	

Domestic violence and suicide are a widespread part of everyday life in Guyana (Parekh, Russ, Amsalem, Rambaran, Langston & Wright, 2012; Staeheli, Kofman & Peake, 2004). The relationships of power that cause domestic violence are complex (Staeheli, et al, 2004; Parekh, et al, 2012). See chapter five for a more detailed discussion on children with SEND who have experienced domestic violence and abuse. My analysis showed that mainstream teachers are confronted with issue of abuse on a daily basis and more so concerning children with SEND. As I got more situated in the data, it suggests that the teachers are not prepared to handle the complexities of abuse in children with impairments. My subjective position as a Guyanese made me tried to defend Guyana's image even when confronted by the prevalence of abuse in the data.

These maps are essential for understanding the situated experiences of the children. They enabled me to delve deeper into the data. When I returned to interpreting the

analysis, and I felt my mapping of situations and meanings was missing some element, I referred back to Adele Clarke writings and was reminded that this is all part of the process of analysis. I reread Clarke's (2005) Situational Analysis where she discusses being overwhelmed by messy maps and data, which resonated strongly with my own experience of research. Clarke's (2005) situational analysis has empirical/conceptual elasticity, and porous boundaries and hybrids are encouraged, which suits the context of this study.

As Clarke (2005) stated you are not finished until you achieved saturation as in traditional grounded theory. As I continued to review the data and my memos another theme emerged, which I called '**Expressing Opposition**'. The emergence of a new theme meant I had missed some critical statements which reflected opposition by children with SEND and bullying in the schools. I returned to the coded transcripts and started remapping statements made by children with SEND to conditions and events. I reviewed interpretive understandings and meanings, and new realizations were made. A minority of transcripts were difficult to categorise and seemed contradictory. However, these cases led to the emergence of another theme. This theme was previously considered a subordinate theme but the story being told by the children of feeling depersonalised, valueless and lonely needed to be expressed as its own category. These were the experiences of children subjected to '**Stay in your lane**' discourses within the two schools.

**Positional Map 4.12: Stay in your lane**

		Achievement Lanes					Middle
		Low	High				
Religious lanes	With sin	Mainstream school is your judge and crucifier					Contradictory position – to achieve and be ‘bad’
			Available position for student with SEND				
Without sin – good							
		Contradictory position to fail but be ‘good’					The higher achievers are also good? Without sin?



Blue indicates the lanes available for pupils with SEND. Also difficult to adopt contrary positions within the discourse as a ‘good’ person but struggling to achieve or conversely a high achiever in some area but labelled as ‘bad’ in some respect.

The high achieving + good person option totally unavailable to children with SEND. It demonstrates a conflation of good – as being marked by not having an impairment. Impairment is punishment.

With the themes temporarily settled, I reviewed my field notes, memos and transcripts for missing aspects from the discourses. I reflected on Clarke’s (2005) advice for researchers doing situational analysis that they need to be practical and open in facilitating analysis through finding processes that occur within the studied phenomenon (Clarke, 2005; Whitburn, 2016). The goal of situational analysis is to critically analyse to produce distinctive analytic understandings, interpretations, and representations of a particular social phenomenon (Clarke, 2005 as cited in Whitburn, 2016; Shildrick 2012). Overall, I believe I have produced a distinctive analytic understandings, interpretations, and representations of the meaning of the experiences of the children with SEND in the two schools I have studied.

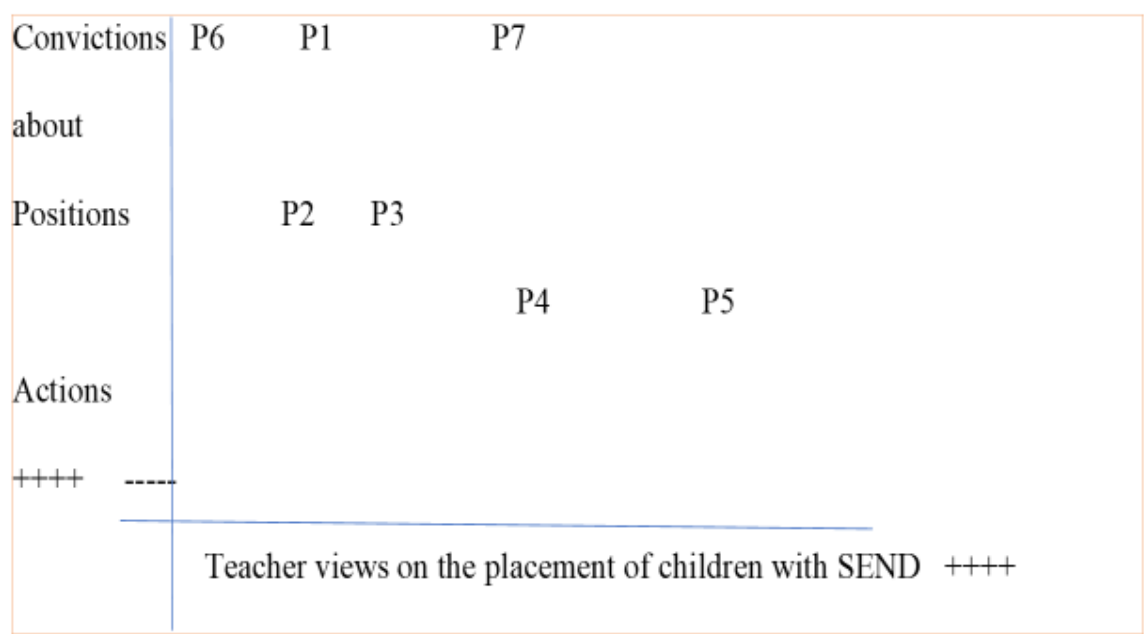
My interpretive understanding of the lived experiences of the children with SEND echoes of the pervasiveness of hegemonic power of the individual deficit model of disability and its influence on their experiences. Children with SEND who are placed in mainstream schools are caught in the dominant discourses about disability and are positioned according to the subjective categorisation given to them by these discourses as was also stated by Amsterdam et al (2015). The understanding I revealed through the experiences of the children suggests Guyana’s primary schools are practising mainstreaming, which is a form of subjective marginalisation. Mainstreaming is subjective marginalisation (Amsterdam et al., 2015) and exclusion based on dis/ability and embedded in mainstream education (Amsterdam et al., 2015; Clarke, 2005 as cited in Whitburn, 2016).

When analysing transcripts of the focus group discussions with the mainstream teachers, I completed a comparative mapping of transcripts from the two schools. From the statements of teachers at both schools, it seems that normalised marginalising practices, through discriminating against children with SEND, were present in the schools. Normalised marginalising practices in mainstream schools, I also have

difficulty comprehending because of my situated position as a Guyanese educator. The teachers kept the actions of children with SEND under surveillance and (almost) always compare them to the perceived norm ascribed by the individual deficit model of disability. Surveillance practices are marginalising to children with SEND (McMaugh, 2011; Amsterdam et al., 2015).

I repositioned myself in the mainstream schools through the raw data transcripts as I had done previously. I reflected critically on the discourses and realised that the marginalised bodies of the children with SEND were also produced by a discourse and practice by the government which portrayed mainstream teachers as lone capable practitioners without support. The demands of such a portrayal overwhelmed the teachers. The positioning of teachers as the primary obstacle to inclusive practice implicated teachers for that which they are not totally responsible for and overlooks the complex situation in mainstream schools and society, which shapes their practices and beliefs. As Carlile (2011), Done et al. (2015) and Grue (2011) suggest, I took my reflection deeper into the data using the map below.

**Positional Map 4.13: Teachers’ position on the placement of children with SEND in their classes in mainstream schools**



P1 = The Minister of Education and other stakeholders in mainstream education hierarchy are responsible for the negative experiences and exclusion of children with SEND in mainstream schools (position held by all teacher).

- P2 = Parents and children with SEND expect too much from mainstream teachers and mainstream schools (position some teachers).
- P3 = Mainstream teachers are neither SEND specialist nor magicians. They cannot ameliorate the conditions and the disablement experienced in mainstream schools (position held by all participating teachers).
- P4 = Mainstream classes are overcrowded and under resourced. Placing more children with SEND in these classes is unfair to the teachers (position held by teachers).
- P5 = Micromanaging professional teachers is depersonalising to teachers who are already considered inhumane when they express their frustration about the placement of children with SEND in their classes (position held by teachers).
- P6 = The individual deficit model of disability best describe the practices in mainstream schools in Guyana. Disabled children have deficits which make their placement in mainstream schools unkind to them (position held by all teachers).
- P7 = Teachers are being used as pawns to advanced the governments illusory agenda and are also blamed for being unable to make reasonable adjustments in their classes for disabled children. Teachers are also abandoned and left unsupported to tailor experiences in areas of SEND they do not understand (position held by teachers in both schools' senior leadership team).

While analysing Positional Map 4.13, I reminded myself of Hodgson & Standish's (2009) position that poststructuralist analysis takes place at the level of the category according to which the subject's identity is constituted so that the individual voices their own experience of that categorisation as a form and means of gaining social justice. The children categorised as having SEND shared their experiences within the two mainstream primary schools and showed the condition of their experiences. The condition of the experiences is more significant in the discourse rather than the structural challenges to the experiences (Foucault, 1991 as cited in Besley, 2015).

One critical factor that influenced the interpretive meaning of both the teachers and children statements in the data analysis was our embodied position in SEND discourse. According to Leatherman (2009), position to a phenomenon influences its

interpretation. In postcolonial Guyana, the culture and the discourse of the dominant individual deficit model of disability among emerging inclusive discourses contributed to the mainstream teachers' critical attitude toward the placement of children with SEND in their classrooms. The same variances produced the children's subjective attitudes as well. Subjective attitudes are firmly structured in the arborescent, hierarchical (but social) networks of mainstream schools. Goodley & Roets (2008) argue that subjective attitudes emanate a disabled identity upon individuals and present them as incapable and without value.

The mapped data also showed additional connecting threads among the themes in which the experiences were revealed. Poststructuralism is an approach to critical reasoning that focuses on the moment of slippage in our systems of meaning as a way of identifying in that subjective space, the ethical choices that we make whether in our writings or spoken discourses when we overcome the subjectivities and move from indeterminacy to certainty of belief to understand, interpret, or shape our social environment. In other chapters, I attempt to explain the meanings and interpretive understanding of the experiences of children with SEND with as much certainty as possible. I have also reflected on my ethical dilemma about what I write guided by my embodied beliefs about SEND as is expected of a poststructuralist.

#### **4.4 Final Thoughts**

Poststructuralism is a practice. Poststructuralism is constantly revived through openness to the new. It is opposed to any absolute certainty but can only work through this opposition in repeated critical and creative practices (Williams, 2005). Poststructuralism does not merely reject statements and claims, it also works within them to undo their exclusive claims to truth and purity. The analysis and interpretive meanings presented in this thesis are by no way absolute. Part of the empirical task, in this case, was to identify which discourses have most salience for children with SEND and their mainstream teachers. This I did through situational analysis and, in this chapter, I have presented exactly how I identified the discourses which are most salient in the experiences of the children with SEND. Situational analysis captures the complexities and multiplicities of social life through thick analyses (Clarke et al, 2018; Whisker, 2018) and this helped to generate the interpretive meanings I present in this

thesis. In this chapter, I have also shown how I used situational analysis to arrive at the interpretive meanings of the experiences of children with SEND revealed through discourses and observation of their lived experiences.

## SECTION 3

### DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

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#### Chapter Five: Marginalised by Social Inequalities

*Sometimes I blank out. Sometimes I don't understand what the teacher is saying. If I ask too many times for an explanation, I get yelled at publicly.*

(Boyo, July 2018 – Interview)

#### 5.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I illustrated a heuristic and emergent use of Clarke's situational analysis to produce thick descriptions and interpretations from the data. I demonstrated how Clarke's situational maps helped me to understand the experiences of the children with SEND and my perspective on their situation.

In this chapter, I focus on children with SEND, who have had similar experiences to that of Boyo. First, I argue that the inclusion of children with SEND in these two schools is, in practice, a form of exclusion. This form of exclusion is through a pervasive system of discrimination that oppresses children whose identities do not fit the normalised expectations of children suitable for mainstream schools. Here, I reveal that some children face obstacles to learning, due to the physical environment, pedagogical styles expected of the teachers, racism and limited resources. Furthermore, I show that the teachers have an almost impossible job, given their resources and environment. I argue that the interplay of such challenges and limited resources leads to negative experiences for children.

In the next section, I discuss the dominant discourses and practices of the school, which have led to children with SEND being marginalised and ignored. In section three, I consider questions of religious and cultural influence on the experiences of children with SEND. As noted in chapter one, religion, ethnicity and culture are crucial elements which influence the conceptualisation of impairments and deficits in Guyana. In section four, I suggest that widespread experience of domestic violence and abuse, have a

significant impact on the learning and socialisation of some children with SEND. In the final part of this chapter, I reflect on my past experiences with Aquennie to show that many of the limitations in resources, the physical environment and attitudinal barriers that existed a decade ago are still present in both schools (see chapter one). Further, I explore how some children cope with the attitudinal barriers and challenges they encounter in the environment.

## **5.1 Marginalised by Race**

During the data analysis, I realised that prevalent forms of marginalisation experienced by some children were not directly or indirectly related to their individual impairments (see chapter four; Table, 4C & Situational Map 4.6). On the one hand, some were related to deficits in the education system, such as the provision of appropriate resources, which led to practices resulting in exclusion for some children. Such deficits in the education system, which caused the marginalisation and exclusion of some children, were based in ableism discourses in the two schools and society. On the other hand, some forms of marginalisation had their antecedents in Guyana's postcolonial legacy and a racialised social hierarchy. For example, racialised hierarchical discourses have positioned native Amerindians at the bottom of Guyana's ethnic strata. The social discourses around Amerindians subjugate them as inferior to the other six races in Guyana. The other six races also have racial tensions among them despite the illusory appearance of racial unity. I begin by highlighting Amera's experience. She faced racial discrimination, marginalisation, negative attitudes, and exclusion, which originated in the sociocultural history of colonial Guyana and has continued unabated in spite of official policies in the postcolonial period. Amera comes from the Forested Highland Region of Guyana 'the jungles'. In the past, her people resided there to avoid enslavement by European colonisers.

According to Lane et al., (2003); Pillay et al., (2018) and Schlinger, (2005), resolving major problems starts by having an understanding of human behaviour. Displacement has significantly affected Amera's socialisation. As a native Amerindian child from the Forested Highland who migrated to the Low Coastal Plain, Amera experienced culture shock through racism. She was also forced to abandon her cultural identity to adopt the perceived superior culture of the dominant races on the coastlands of Guyana. The

culture and practices of the coastlanders were elevated above her native 'bush' culture in mainstream schools. Also, she had to face a variety of social barriers because the teachers did not understand many of her behaviours, which they associated with mental health problems or classified as silliness.

Amera's people experienced widespread political and societal marginalisation, in spite of the fact that Guyana is independent and there are national efforts to celebrate Amerindian Culture and develop national understanding of their culture and customs. National efforts to celebrate Amerindian culture include showcasing an Amerindian village as a heritage site each year and nationally televising the achievements of Amerindians in education, politics, business and science. However, Amerindians remain on the lowest tier of Guyana's socio-cultural stratification (Bisram, 2015; Danns, 2014; Misir, 1998 & Smith, 1971). Amerindians subordinated position on the lowest tier of Guyana's socio-cultural stratification was also sustained through the importance attached to celebrating their heritage and culture which contest for the month of September<sup>2</sup> that dominantly celebrates Education over Amerindian Heritage. Moreover, Amerindian attire is not generally welcomed in mainstream schools and other public institutions such as courts and government offices. For example, on May 25, 2018, a primary school student was left traumatised after his indigenous dress was deemed inappropriate by teachers at his school's Culture Day Celebrations where he was mocked by fellow students.

Culture Day is celebrated at three points of the academic year. First, the culture of the races in schools is celebrated at the end of the teaching year. Second, the culture of people living in Guyana is celebrated at the Republic (February 23) and Independence celebration (May 26) and, finally, it is celebrated during East Indian arrival and African emancipation celebrations. All three cultural events are connected to the presence of the seven races in Guyana. Yet, exclusion and marginalisation are experienced by subordinated races due to the perceived greater value or uniqueness of some of the cultures. For example, two years after the televised exclusion of an Amerindian child

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<sup>2</sup> In Guyana, September is the month in which education is celebrated. These celebrations include reading camps, drama, debates, child friendly school competition. Approximately a decade ago, in an attempt to be inclusive in society, the month was also designated Amerindian Heritage Month. However, celebrating education takes precedence over Amerindian heritage.



from his school's culture day, their tribal leader contested exclusion based on cultural attire. On March 11, 2020, a presidential candidate and tribal leader of Amera's community, Lennox Shuman, arrived at court dressed in what he called his traditional indigenous clothing to listen to the arguments in the ongoing elections case. Upon entry, Shuman was prohibited from mounting the stairs. He was told by court officers that he was not permitted in the courtroom as his attire was inappropriate. There are no documented cases in Guyana of any other race in Guyana being denied access to public offices for wearing their traditional garments.

Grotti and Brightman (2016) argue that native Amerindians are characterised as invisible and, in many instances, excluded from full social participation in the Guianas (British, French and Dutch). The constitution of Amerindians as invisible was through the discourse that presents their culture as outside of the accepted norm and, which need to remain hidden unless used for display at national cultural celebrations, museums and heritage galleries like Guyana's Castellani House. Amera's experience in school reflected the characteristic exclusion of a race deemed invisible but was also dependent on perceived 'jungle' association. However, research suggests that inclusion could provide a 'welcoming community' for each individual to retain and develop his or her own cultural identity (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, 2011; Blanco & Takemoto, 2006; Gajewski, 2017; Loreman, 2009; Singal, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017; UNESCO, 2017). Historically and presently, Amera and her people have not been 'welcomed' and have been marginalised at a national level, and this is the foundation which created the situation in the local mainstream school, which led to her marginalisation there. Her experiences generated a new understanding and interpretation of the challenges faced by children in the two schools.

Amera's situation provides an understanding of marginalisation by race in two significant ways. First, Amera's experience highlights exclusion when laws are not enforced. Amera is a native Amerindian and Amerindians are Guyana's indigenous people. As such, Amerindian culture, identity and customs are protected by law through the Amerindian Act of 2006, which includes the revision of the Act of 1951, amended in 1961, and 1976 (Grotti & Brightman, 2016). The law states in chapter 65:01 that Amerindians culture need to be respected in all national institutions. The practices I observed in the school indicated that the school, as a national education institution, was

not respecting Amera's culture. In practice, the school highlights Amera's culture as a body of knowledge - in terms of topics and resources but exclude in terms of attitudes towards Amerindians during curriculum delivery. For example, when the topic of Amerindians was presented during a typical Social Studies lesson, it was presented as worth knowing to pass your assessment. Knowing about Amerindians and their culture is rarely framed as an opportunity to find out about Guyana cultural diversities inclusively. It is presented as a separate part of Guyana's heritage distinct from the accepted collective heritage. For example, Mrs Winter, Amera's mainstream teacher, directly ignored Amera's culture in the selection of instructional materials and activities. Mrs. Winter selection of instructional materials and activities was based on the accepted Guyanese cultures deemed suitable for normalised classroom curriculum discourse. Further, I have emphasised that teachers need to be sensitive to race when selecting or producing instructional materials (Lashley, 2019).

**Mrs. Winter:** *Mr. Lashley, I know you writing in your black book that Amera is not involved in the learning activities but I do not have the resources to include her [Field notes, 2018].*

Mrs Winter thinks my research journal is my black book of records of teachers' practices similar to those used when teachers are assessed by Guyanese education officers. In her statement to me, she acknowledges that she has not involved Amera because she does not have the resources. Resourcing learning is clearly important but equally important is the attitude toward Amera and her status within the classroom.

Second, Amera was displaced by tragedy due to the loss of her parents and she could not speak the language of her new environment, which made expressing her grief almost impossible, and this resulted in her not receiving the necessary support to overcome the loss of her parents. This inability to express her emotions led to behaviours which were classified as inappropriate by teachers and students.

*Amera is sad again today. She is often crying and making mournful sounds. The children in her class are referring to her as the crazy bush girl. I am confused because I do not speak Lokono either. I sat with her. Mrs. Winter keeps looking questioningly at me. Amera stopped crying and showed me her blank book. Amera is lost and lonely in her new school [Field notes, 2018].*

Amera faced racial, social and cultural barriers at school in a time in her life when tragedy made her vulnerable. Whilst not having appropriate resources to be able to teach Amera or cater to her evident emotional distress is part of wider lack of inclusion, the specific lack of challenge of the term ‘crazy bush girl’ demonstrates that the cultural practices of racism are allowed to continue and have even become normalised in the school. The expression ‘crazy bush girl’ emphasises a historical rupture in the value attributed to Amerindians by other races to maintain their perceived superiority. It also reflects the practise of forced acculturation on a race perceived as uncivilised (Misir, 1998 & Smith, 1971). In my observations, Mrs Winter was constantly looking at me. She seems confused about my interest in Amera’s wellbeing and sitting with her while in the class. Her gaze seemed to be through a racial superiority lens, which was subordinated in the classroom. Mrs. Winter’s race is considered to be the superior race in Guyana. However, in mainstream education my superiority to Mrs. Winter is established by, and contingent upon, education and professional attainments. Further, her earlier reference to my black book and researcher status framed me as superior in mainstream discourse. This identity Mrs. Winter attributed to me, and her resulting attitude, was caused by the dissonance it created in identity and power in the classroom and society. As a result, her gaze and statement about me writing negatively in my black book could be interpreted as an attempt to protect her image, which she may have felt would be damaged if I recorded Amera’s exclusion.

One of the problems for Amera was that staff did not recognise her behaviours as expressions of grief. Their understanding of her strangeness as Amerindian caused them to attribute her grief-stricken behaviour to her racial characteristics. Mrs Winter was bemused but did not recognise such bemusement as part of a racist response. Mrs. Winter questioning stares at my interactions with Amera also suggest racial mistrust (Bisram, 2015; Danns, 2014; Misir, 1998 & Smith, 1971). As discussed in the previous paragraph, Mrs. Winter was trying to project her racial superiority over myself and Amera which was contested by my academic and professional superiority and allegiance to children with SEND like Amera.

## **September 2018 - Interview with Amera's Aunt**

**Amera's Aunt:** *Lidon, this is a tough time for Amera. She has lost her parents tragically. We talk to her at home. However, I know being in school will now be another challenge she will face in this tragic period of her life.*

**L L:** *This is challenging for such a young child.*

**Amera's Aunt:** *I know the school does not have the resources, and maybe she is better off back in her native home. I cannot stay at home to teach her English. I am hoping she picks it up by just being in the school.*

**L L:** *So there are no direct efforts made to support her learning. What about the use of technology?*

**Amera's Aunt:** *I tried it, but Amera does not respond well.*

**L L:** *Does she talk about school at home in her native Lokono?*

**Amera's Aunt:** *Yes. However, it is always sad. She feels it is not a happy place. She wants to go back home. She says the teachers are not helpful. They treat some children nicer than others.*

**L L:** *Has she mentioned someone she is comfortable with?*

**Amera's Aunt:** *Not as yet. I am hoping she finds such a person very soon. I am apprehensive about her future with all these challenges she is facing.*

Amera was unhappy at her new school because she was lonely. She was lonely because the participants in the classroom used her race to subjugate her further into a more vulnerable state. Due to the communication barrier, i.e. her teachers were not able to speak her native language, Lokono, she was ignored. The communication barrier in multilingual Guyana is a deficit in the education system which reflects the system's view of the language as inferior and unimportant. If the language is inferior, then those identified by the language are also seen as inferior. This perception of inferiority by identity and language further suggests the lack of social cohesion in Guyana and racial tension even in schools among children and between children and teachers. Amera was in a subordinated position where her language, her discourse, was perceived to be less valid, and part of what forms the identities of 'bush people'. There are nine indigenous Amerindian tribes in Guyana who speak nine different native languages. Native

children like Amera are expected to learn English and abandon their native languages to be accommodated in the education system. Requiring a group of people to relinquish their language or be excluded from formal education is racially biased and a form of national marginalisation. Mainstream teachers are not expected to speak native languages, so being unable to communicate with Amera, was not marginalisation or discrimination by the teachers themselves, but rather resulted from structural inequality to maintain the racialised hierarchy of English, which is not a native language. The structural inequality was further embedded by the compulsory and exclusive use of English because of its perceived colonial superiority for curriculum delivery in the mainstream schools, despite Guyana being a multi-lingual society. According to Liasidou and Symeou (2018), inclusion is constituted by, and contingent on, social justice and human rights. Amera's exclusion based on race, language and structural inequality constituted a violation of social justice and her human rights.

Further, Liasidou and Symeou (2018), state that the omission of social justice and learner diversity in educational discourse is indicative of the neoliberal imperatives contingent upon low priority attributed to issues of equity and learner diversity, with particular reference to students designated as having SEND. Mrs. Winter did not understand Amera's behaviour and her misunderstanding was caused by her situatedness in the discourse on the exoticness and uncultured nature of Amerindian behaviours. Mrs. Winter interaction with Amera reflected a kind of situated biasness to the naturalised exotic behaviour in the cultured mainstream classroom. Mrs. Winter actions are also a form of social injustice, through not acknowledging Amera's behaviour in the same way as she did to other children who were not Amerindians.

### **Classroom Observation September 2018**

*Mrs Winter looked at Amera and said 'silly child'. Amera was cuddling a book, a book written in Lokono. Later in the day, Amera screamed suddenly while still holding on to the book. Mrs Winter shouted at her to be quiet. Once she was quiet, Mrs Winter carried on teaching the rest of the class ignoring Amera. At recess, Amera climbed the tamarind behind the school and stayed by herself. It was reported to Mrs Winter. She replied, 'leave the bush girl alone.'* [Field notes, 2018]

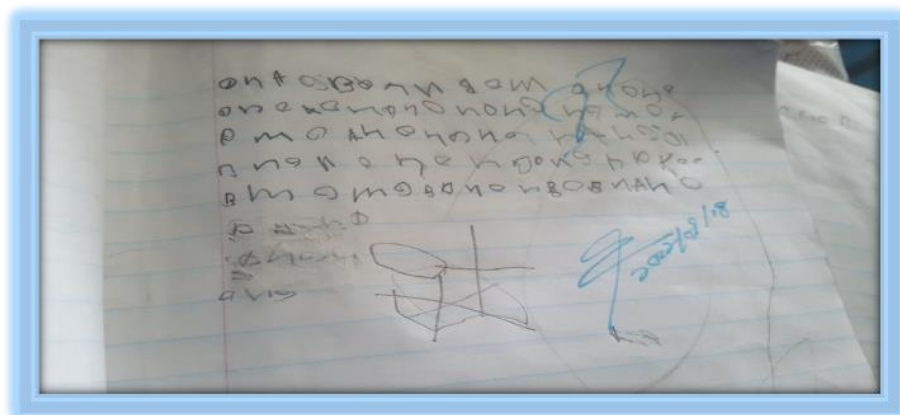
First, Mrs Winter referred to Amera as a ‘silly child’ indicating that her behaviour was comical and not accepted. She did this without making an effort to understand Amera’s actions. Mrs. Winter perceived Amera’s ‘bush girl’ behaviour as not worthy of her attention. Second, neither shouting at Amera to be quiet nor ignoring her improved Mrs. Winter’s understanding of her behaviour. Shouting at her to be quiet can also be viewed as telling Amera that she is not worthy of expressing her feelings in the classroom. Probably, it is suitable to express herself only in ‘the jungles’ with animals. When Mrs Winter told another child to leave the ‘bush girl’ alone, it could be interpreted as meaning that it was acceptable for the children to ignore her, just as Mrs Winter did. Ignoring Amerindians is a colonial legacy inherited by Guyanese. One of the colonial responses to the Amerindians was to leave them alone as they were seen as both alien and dangerous. It is a legacy that persists in the present time in the responses of others towards Amera in school and is part of the wider racial discursive practices in Guyana. This legacy is what makes it so difficult for Mrs Winter to engage with Amera – she is a ‘bush girl’ and that makes her strange, dangerous but most of all someone to be left alone.

The indigenous customs, traditions and practices of Amerindians living in Guyana’s forested jungle can appear strange and primitive to coastland residents (Summary Report Guyana-EU *FLEGT*, 2015). The primitive appearance of the culture has led to a negative stereotyping of the lifestyle of this native race during and after the colonial period. Despite the public discourse by the government and the Amerindian Peoples’ Association (APA) of Guyana advocating racial cohesion and equality nationally, in the classroom, Amera faced racial exclusion. I also noted that she was teased by Mrs Winter and the children in her class. Mrs. Winter’s actions in her class were in a real sense a mockery of Amerindian heritage. The dissonance between discourses promoting racial cohesion and the actual practices observed in Amera’s school highlights the very real effects of a legacy of a racial hierarchy that still exists in communities and neighbourhood mainstream schools. Teasing and using the Amerindians as entertainment is also a racial practice rooted in colonialism. I witnessed the children bullying and calling Amera derogatory names such as ‘Jungle Monkey’, ‘Primitive Native’ and ‘Bush Baboon’. Racial stereotyping seems, therefore, to be a major factor which contributed to Amera’s exclusion and marginalisation.

## 5.2 Marginalisation by Normalised Stereotypical Practices and Beliefs

Normalised stereotypical practices and beliefs cause marginalisation for children with SEND in the two schools. Normalised stereotypical practices and beliefs are maintained through legacies of superiority and inferiority among the cultures in Guyana. For example, an established stereotypical practice does not celebrate the culture of rural fishermen. A lack of cultural celebration was evident when Ravi was told by Miss Nathaniel, his teacher, *'Go catch fish that is what you are good at, Ravi'*. The statement was intended as a reprimand for inappropriate behaviour, but reinforced Ravi's belief that he was a failure. When a teacher suggests to a child in the classroom that they should go and catch fish because it is what they are good at, the implication is that they cannot manage the classroom work. Furthermore, doing this publicly in the classroom is an exclusionary practice. It is an invitation to the child to leave the class and/or not participate in the learning experience. Mrs Nathaniel is, in effect, indicating that he is unteachable. Viewing a child with SEND as unteachable is a legacy maintained by discourses and attitudes, enshrined in society and law, towards children with disabilities. Besides publicly humiliating Ravi, Miss Nathaniel also carried on the legacy of exclusion in his notebook. Without attempting to correct his efforts, she inserted question marks and signed it, which seems to reflect her attitude that he is not fit to be educated

**Photo 5.1: A picture from Ravi's school book, September 2018**



Her attitude seems to reflect a wider held view, as research has found that normalised traditional negative attitudes and stereotypes are prevalent towards children with SEND in the mainstream schools of the developing countries in the Caribbean (Caribbean

Development Bank, 2018; Caribbean Human Development Report (CHDR 2016, 10; Declaration of Pétion Ville, 2013; Gayle-Geddes, 2016; Kingston Accord, 2004). Traditional legacies of past discourses and attitudes, towards disabilities, enshrined in society and law, negatively influenced Amera's and Ravi's school experiences. Through these observations, I learnt that introducing the social model of disability discourse is vital to overcome enshrined negative legacies and attitudes that affect children's experiences more than their impairments.

On Monday, October 14, 2018, I witnessed another demonstration of the negative attitudes described in the paragraph above. Rosemary, a child with developmental delays, came to school with an unpleasant odour. The teacher, Mrs Hamilton, shouted at her in the presence of the other children as Miss Nathaniel had done to Ravi. As a result, Rosemary started to cry and the children laughed and were allowed to continue laughing, which deeply embarrassed Rosemary. Being humiliated in this way, coupled with adverse environmental conditions and lack of stimulation, could lead to a higher risk of neurological and behavioural disorders in vulnerable children (Allen & Kelly, 2015; Edossa et al., 2017; Greenough & Black, 2013 ) Further evidence of the risks of neurological and behavioural disorders in vulnerable children can be found in research by Ali, (2013), Handal et al., (2007), Hendry et al., (2018), Hernandez & Caçola, (2015), Iverson, (2010), Johnson et al., (2016), Levey & Polirstok, (2011) and Wendt et al. (1984). My awareness about vulnerabilities in children and the risks led me to ask Miss Hamilton about her reaction in the classroom. My question appeared to offend her.

#### **October 2018 – Miss Hamilton Response**

**L L:** *Miss Hamilton, why did you behave the way you did to Rosemary in the presence of the entire class?*

**Miss Hamilton:** *It is not inhumane, Mr Lashley. It is one thing for teachers to have to be dealing with these overcrowded classrooms. It is another thing when the overcrowded classes are full of children with SEND and other deficits and little or no support from either parents or community or the education department. It is also frustrating when you are already pressured as a teacher in an open plan school with limited resources and enormous demands. I did not sign up for this when I became a teacher. Then, I have to punish to breathe*



*when children like Rosemary, who are incapable of learning anything, come smelling pungent and looking unsightly. As a teacher, I have to deal with all this. I have nothing personally against Rosemary. It is not her fault she was born into poverty. I go home most days with a headache from the various odours I have to endure. I am sure Rosemary's clothing smells of urine three out of the five days a week. She cannot learn. She has developmental delays I cannot cater for, yet I am expected to, and I am appraised negatively when my class academic percentage decline. I have my resignation typed, and I am just waiting to submit it.*

Mrs Hamilton's response to my question by first stating that her expression was not inhumane suggests that maybe she is aware that her comments attack on the humanity of children with SEND. Her clarification about the inhumanity in her statement suggests awareness of situations when she does behave inhumanely. It also indicates that she felt I believed that her response was inhumane, so she was defensive in her response. Mrs. Hamilton was frustrated, upset, angry and felt betrayed by the education system in which she works. She felt betrayed because she felt the expectations from the education authorities, parents and even children with SEND as a mere teacher are too high. Mrs Hamilton further expressed her feelings of betrayal by differentiating overcrowded classes into those without children with SEND and those with children with SEND. This differentiation seems to be supported by Mrs Hamilton expectations that teaching children with SEND is more frustrating. Mrs Hamilton's differentiation is also based on the issue of an overcrowded class of children with SEND. Mrs Hamilton also attributed her frustration to Rosemary's smell overwhelming her physically. She highlights this when she said, *'I have to punish to breathe when children like Rosemary, who are incapable of learning anything, come smelling pungent and looking unsightly.'* Punishing to breathe indicates the distress Rosemary's smell placed on Mrs Hamilton respiratory system.

Mrs Hamilton associated Rosemary with a particular group of children who are incapable of learning but capable of aggravating her frustration and anger. Mrs Hamilton also concluded that developmental delays equated to inability to learn. She further associates Rosemary's inability to learn to the education appraisal system which she perceives as likely to be negative towards her for being unable to cater for Rosemary's needs. Mrs Hamilton frames resignation as the way to accept defeat from

the situation which portrays her as inhumane. She then had to defend her actions to individuals like me (persons who represent the mainstream education hierarchy) who she feels do not understand her plight but are exercising a form of Foucault's gaze.

As noted above by Mrs Hamilton, teachers are expected to do an almost impossible job in adverse environmental conditions and with limited resources. Miss Hamilton's statement above highlights how such conditions which are caused by the emergence of an inclusion discourse without fully acquiring social justice for teacher. As she stated, too much is expected of teachers who are without the necessary support. Also, interestingly, Mrs Hamilton separated Rosemary from her experiences to justify her reactions. She did this by saying, '*I have nothing personally against Rosemary. It is not her fault she was born into poverty.*' This also reflects Kamenopoulou's (2018) statement that poverty disables children.

While Rosemary was in despair, Pam's experiences highlighted a new dilemma in the same environment. Added to her epileptic condition, Pam was paralyzed in her lower body due to a motor vehicle accident. Research suggests that such injuries are associated with elevated psychological distress that can continue years after the injury (Craig et al., 2016). Because the school facilities were inaccessible to children with physical impairments, Pam's father supported her. He brought her to school and manually lifted her into the classroom and would also be present to take her to the toilets during break times. Pam told me that her condition was the result of God's punishment for her being rude and disobedient. Such views of impairment as a divine punishment are echoed by the children throughout many of the interviews. It was also echoed in religious discourse that promoted the idea that one could not interfere with God's punishments. Such religious discourses will be explored later in the chapter.

#### **November 2018 – Interview: Pam after a short period of hospitalization**

**L L:** *Hello Pam, it is so good to see you back at school again.*

**Pam:** *My school is not the best, and the teachers are not always nice, but I have some friends here, and in order for my dreams to come true I need to endure this struggle.*

**L L:** *Is school a big struggle for you?*

**Pam:** *Life is a struggle. I just came out of the hospital. I cannot walk. Teachers are scared to be natural around me because of my epilepsy. With all the things I go through, school is the littlest of all my struggles, but it is a big struggle. I need to use the washroom. It is another half hour until my father gets here. I hate to beg the teachers for help. Their faces always state their unwillingness, but I cannot access the toilets on my own.*

One of the primary arguments in this chapter is that some children face obstacles to learning due to the physical environment, pedagogical styles expected of the teachers, normalised stereotypical practices and limited resources. Pam shows a dilemma of choosing between two evils. She does this by highlighting two negatives about her school. First, her school was not portrayed as the best place for a child with SEND and second, the teachers were viewed as not always being nice to children with SEND. She expressed that the two negatives do not equate to the two positives she sees in attending mainstream school. The positives she sees in school frame her reasons to persist. First, she has friends at school and second, her dreams can only be realised by attending school. Pam highlights these limitations in the environment and resources while referring to it as a struggle she needs to endure. Pam echoed the struggles of Ravi, Rosemary and Amera. For a child to repeatedly state that school is a struggle suggests the significant barriers she faces there. It also suggests the mental burden and challenges simply attending school causes. When necessary facilities, such as toilets, are not accessible, physical impairments become major exclusionary struggles for disabled children. Since Pam was not born with the impairment but acquired it recently, the teachers needed to recognise that she had recently fallen on the other side of the inclusion/exclusion coin. Pam's experiences provide insights into two dimensions of the SEND discourse. Her situation had changed from being a child who was not seen as having SEND, despite her epilepsy, to a child perceived as having a SEND facilitated by the combination of epilepsy and physical impairment.

It is almost impossible for Mrs. Murphy, Pam's teacher, to cater for every new situation in an environment with limited resources. As reflected in the extract below, the teacher is affected by Pam's experiences and is concerned about Pam's emotional wellbeing. She is also concerned about how her actions might be excluding Pam and the psychological effects of such exclusion. Mrs. Murphy is caught in limbo. If she challenges Pam and tries to build her motivation, she may trigger Pam's seizures but, if

she does not challenge her, she negatively affects Pam's self-belief leading to her feeling excluded. Either way, Mrs. Murphy's action causes a negative outcome.

### **September 2018 – Mrs. Murphy's Reflection**

*I was also Pam's teacher in Grade Three before the accident. She was a very aspiring and promising child when the seizures were less frequent. I used to find it rewarding to challenge her. She would always surpass expectations. Since the accident and the frequent seizures, I am scared and uncertain about how to support her. If I simplify them, I feel like I am disrespecting her. If I challenge her too much and a seizure comes, I feel responsible. It is a torturing battle for me. She is one of my favourite children, and I do not want to affect her motivation and self-esteem. That is her strength at the moment.*

A child's functioning depends upon emotional factors and educators and parents need to strive to help the child to overcome these by mobilising and deploying adequate support (Dakwa, 2013; Kinalski et al., 2017). Mrs Murphy was striving to help Pam and was trying to adequately support her. This was an overwhelming situation for both Pam and Mrs. Murphy and the interplay of challenges and limited resources led to negative experiences for Pam. The argument in the first part of this chapter was based on the experiences of Pam, Amara, Ravi and Rosemary and it reflected the normalised practices which led to their exclusion, due partly to the deficits in an adverse mainstream school environment. The argument I have presented thus far is that some children are marginalised as disabled in the schools, not because of impairments but because basic access to the school's facilities and curriculum are hindered by social and attitudinal barriers. For example, legislation did not guarantee the inclusion of Amara, an indigenous child from the jungle because the schools do not follow it as they should. Other children are excluded because the practitioners in the education system are frustrated and feel betrayed. Further, children are marginalised and excluded because of language barriers, poverty and/or limitations placed upon teachers by the government's organisation of mainstream education. They are also excluded by the government's conceptualisation of inclusion by merely focusing on impairments without emphasis on social justice for children with SEND or their mainstream teachers.

### 5.3 The Ignored

*Mi can't read, mi can't write propra. Mi neva passes them maths test, and mi hear mi grade four teacha say she nah waste time behind me. Mi nah like she. She bad mind Bad! Bad! [I cannot read and write correctly. I never passed Mathematics. I heard my Grade four teacher say I am a waste of time. I do not like her. She is very bad minded.]*

Junior Bob, July 2018 – Interview

Like Junior Bob, I can also identify with this situation of feeling destined to fail in elementary school and being ignored. For me, it was not because I had a learning disability but because I was sick and absent from school for an extended period. I received no support when I returned. Instead, I was made to take the Grade Five annual examinations, which I failed. When I moved to Grade Six, I was ignored because I was, seemingly, destined to fail. Some children with SEND in the two schools face similar experiences to mine. In a sense, the school set these children up to fail national and other assessments, by ignoring and neglecting them (see chapter four; Table, 4 A & Situational Map 4.5).

Junior Bob had multiple learning disabilities and developmental delays similar to Rosemary. His relatives, who in the past attended Saints Primary School, had all failed to achieve significantly and were considered to be failures. This placed him in a disadvantaged position from the time he entered school. The teachers' perception of his family's heritage was influenced by the dominant discourses on SEND, which led to his fated to fail categorisation and exclusion. Many other social issues had an impact on society's perception of the Bob family. For example, the teachers and children at Saints Primary had to be tested and vaccinated for tuberculosis (TB) because 'a Bob' had been diagnosed with it. Such developments further fuelled the negative discourses which contributed to Junior Bob's exclusion.

Junior Bob's irregular attendance at school was also influenced by the discourses about his family inappropriate behaviours and was likely to have been more directly caused by the corporal punishments he received for inappropriate behaviour. He could often be seen loitering in the vicinity of the school's compound or at one of the vendors' stalls outside and would run away when teachers tried to speak to him. On one occasion, he stripped naked in the presence of the teachers, children and parents, then proceeded to

go home. For this, he was subjected to more corporal punishment. On another occasion, he placed a chair behind the door of the toilet, locking in a reception child. When asked about the reasons for his inappropriate behaviour, he laughed and then stopped suddenly, and stared blankly. His actions caused Mr. Gordon, a teacher who held strong religious beliefs, to frame Junior Bob as possessed by demons. Mr. Gordon framing of Junior Bob behaviour on a religious basis was supported by the religious discourse at Saints Primary about impairments and inappropriate behaviours being religiously associated.

Junior Bob's mother tried to ensure that he attended school despite the negative attitudes towards him in school. I observed Junior Bob's mother's enthusiasm and interest in his education. She never missed any of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) meetings and also volunteered at the school. Her involvement and enthusiasm seemed neither to have a positive influence on Junior Bob's experience nor the negative attitudes of teacher towards Junior Bob.

*Mrs. Bob, Junior Bob's mother, approached Mr. Gordon enquiring about the assessment Junior Bob had to write. He told her in the presence of children and two other parents not to worry about it because Junior Bob cannot pass the assessment [Field notes, 2018].*

Parental education and involvement have a moderating effect on the child's interest in learning and schooling (Grant et al., 2010; Mahuro et al., 2016). Junior Bob's mother attempted to be fully involved in her child's learning and schooling. Despite her attempts to be fully involved in Junior Bob's school experiences, Mrs. Bob faced negative reactions from teachers like Mr. Gordon because Mr. Gordon's response excluded Mrs. Bob from the discussion about her son's education. Junior Bob face similar exclusion in the dialogues in the classroom.

Such exclusionary practice is likely to have caused emotional pain. Indeed, Junior Bob informed me that he felt hurt whenever the teachers did not take the time to explain the learning tasks to him. He also said that when teachers embarrassed him in the presence of other children, he felt hurt. Research suggests that such experiences could compromise mental health (Ford et al, 2019 & Heirigs et al., 2019).

*Mrs. Archer interrupted my conversation with Junior Bob to send him on an errand. After my conversation with Junior Bob, I remained in the class to*

*observe the afternoon session. Within this two hours session, Mrs. Archer sent Junior Bob on four errands outside of the classroom [Field notes, 2018].*

Mrs. Archer excluded Junior Bob from valuable learning time by sending him on errands for her. I observed that each time Junior Bob was sent on an errand Mrs. Archer continued teaching. She also did not explain the learning to Junior when he returned to the class.

### **July 2018, Interview**

**L L:** *I looked at your notebooks. Why haven't you tried to do your learning?*

**Junior Bob:** *Mi don't undastand nuff time when them teacha explain de wuk and when mi asks them fu help them does chase or ignore mi or tell me to draw. Mr. Lashley, mi sometimes copy de wuk back to front and all teacha do is scratch up mi book. Then mi nah feel like doing no more wuk. Sometimes mi does feel hurt, and mi does run home.*

**L L:** *So you only run home after your feelings are hurt?*

**Junior Bob:** *Yea them teacha does embarrass and shame people so bad and them other children does laff. Mi does want cry but mi can't make anybody see mi cry.*

**L L:** *Why are you afraid of letting someone see you cry?*

**Junior Bob:** *Them children gun laff mi.*

**L L:** *Tell mi something about Saints Primary Schools.*

**Junior Bob:** *Them teacha only like bright children. Dunce children like me and if u disable too bad, them nah like you at all.*

This interview highlighted the dynamics of the relationship between teachers and some children with SEND. Junior Bob's experiences engender depersonalisation, shaming and embarrassment which were reflections of Mrs Archer actions in the classroom. He reported being hurt emotionally due to the mockery of and laughter of his peers without SEND whenever he failed a learning experience or acted inappropriately because he was confused. His perception that his teachers did not like him resulted from his experience of the difference in treatment between children classified as intelligent and

those who were not. I also noted earlier in the chapter that Mrs Hamilton made a similar classification as Mrs. Archer. Mrs Hamilton classified the overcrowded class issue by differentiating children based on the whether they have SEND or not. Mrs Hamilton and Mrs. Archer's classification is also reflected by other teachers which led to the exclusion of the children negatively classified.

In general, teachers ignored Junior Bob's learning needs but, as an errand boy, he deployed mathematical, geographical and memory skills to solve problems, which represented an opportunity to enhance his learning, which was missed by the teachers. Junior Bob always completed the errands with accuracy and preciseness. For example, during our interview, Mrs. Archer sent Junior Bob on errand. She told him to go to the third classroom from the Northern staircase. When he got there, he had to ask Mrs. Wilson for thirty-five 'Let's Pass Mathematics' level Six textbooks. From where I sat in the classroom, I tried to work out the location of the classroom and struggled. Junior Bob returned promptly, successfully negotiating the errand. Several researchers (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2013; Jitendra et al., 2013; Mevarech & Amrany, 2008; Pascual & San Pedro, 2018; Powell, Fuchs & Fuchs, 2013; & Paulsen, 2010) indicate that teachers need to have strategies to help students who struggle. Junior Bob presented a strategy which could have been used to help him but the teacher didn't realise there was a possibility of developing learning through the errands she sent Junior Bob to complete.

Junior Bob talked about his teacher 'scratching up' his book. When I looked at his literacy notebook, I found several negative comments, including '*You write like when frogs jump out of ink.*' and '*Can you not copy one line accurately?*' These comments demean Junior Bob as being unable because his writing abilities fall outside the accepted standards. This ableism stripped Junior of his self-worth through the negative commentary on his work and public humiliation. Taken together, they were likely to jeopardise his mental health.

All children need to have teachers explain tasks clearly and fully and not be ignored (De La Paz et al., 2000; Kvam, 2018; Price & Price-Mohr, 2018). Teachers at both schools were constrained by time and were monitored strictly to see if they were following the national timetable. Any deviation to facilitate needs by, for example, giving additional time would be seen as breaching the standardised expectations (see



chapter seven). Children with learning disabilities (LD) need to be provided with reminders about the tasks and the appropriate needs-based support materials. In Junior Bob's case, he was not supported with either reminders about his tasks or support materials, and, according to my observations, he was often directly ignored.

As was emphasised throughout the preceding part of the chapter, some mainstream teachers are failing children with SEND by ignoring their diverse needs (Brownlee, 2000; Brownlee & Bertelsen, 2006; Chan, 2008; Cheng, et al., 2009; Eickelmann & Vennemann, 2017; Kelly, 2013; Lashley, 2017, 2019; Muis, 2004; Sing & Khine, 2008; Woodcock, 2011). Since the dominant discourse in Guyana is that children with SEND cannot cope and succeed in a mainstream primary school, it generates the normalised practise of ignoring 'difficult learners' that some teachers deploy in their classrooms.

Like Junior Bob, Jonese was ignored due to a deficit in resources. Jonese has Speech, Language and Communication Need (SLCN). Children with SLCN face negative educational, social and emotional problems because of this impairment (Goswami & Bryant, 2010; Mroz, 2014). This group of children is ignored and abandoned to fail because the schools do not have the human resources to assist children with SLCN. Jonese was in the group of children ignored and abandoned to fail.

### **October 2018 - Conversation During Participant Observation**

**Mrs Mitchell:** *Jonese is tied tongue, and she cannot speak properly. She struggles to read, and it frustrates her. It is very challenging to get the children not to imitate her at recess. It has affected her learning. Long now I told her mother to get her special help. We cannot help her at this school, Mr Lashley. Mr Lashley, I am no specialist.*

Each primary school needs to have an oral literacy expert responsible for the development of teachers' classroom talk and pupils speaking and listening skills (Alexander, 2010). Teachers' discourses play a crucial role in the development of verbal language skills through the dialogic repertoire (Alexander, 2012; Goswami & Bryant, 2010; Mroz, 2014). My observations suggested that teachers had not tried the dialogic approach with Jonese. Instead, they ignored her because the school lacked SLCN or oral literacy specialists and did not have the finances to acquire the resources or support needed. Mrs Mitchell felt she lacked the specialist training to meet Jonese's needs, and she had suggested to Jonese's mother that she could seek specialist help.

During my interviews, I would usually give Jonese my tablet to type her responses. The following response shows how her identity was moulded by helplessness and despair.

### **Jonese Typed Response**

*I am different from the other children at school. I know I am. I cannot talk to the teachers, and they find it hard to help me. I cannot explain myself to them because of how things are at this school. Maybe if I go to the United States of America or England, I will get the help I need. I cry every night to sleep. I want to learn. This school is not helping and mom is saying it is not good for me and she will take me out of the school. I know if she takes me out of school, she will teach me at home because she has no money to send me to a school in Georgetown. I know the other children treat me bad and ignore me. It does not bother me, but it hurts mom.*

Jonese positioned herself as different from other children in a similar way to Mrs Hamilton and Mrs. Archer. Jonese's statement, '*I am different from the other children at school. I know I am.*' suggests this classification and positioned it negatively. Her struggles in school, like Pam, are echoed in the statements, '*Teachers find it hard to help me*' and '*I cannot explain myself to them because of how things are at this school*'. The difference between Pam and Jonese is that Pam believes there could be an opportunity for help in the school whereas Jonese envisages her help as coming from a place external to the school and the country. She sees support as only accessible from the global North. Through her frustration, Jonese made clear that she wants to learn. As is evident from the report of an observation later in this section, Jonese has learnt critical concepts needed in school. Jonese also emphasised that resources were a barrier both at home and at school. Jonese is seemingly unconcerned by her powerless identity. She is aware that her mother is affected emotionally and that causes her pain.

In the context of mainstream schooling, teachers expect children to have verbal language skills that are sufficiently well developed for them to participate fully. However, Jonese did not have very good verbal language skills because of her impairment. She explained that the teachers found it hard to help her, and this led to her exclusion. However, her typed responses on my tablet revealed well-developed written language skills. In relation to speech impairments, research have found that if the child has an impairment which limits or prevents his/her participation in the dialogue, then

classroom discourses could be ineffective in facilitating the development of speech language and communication skills of that child (Alexander, 2012; Goswami & Bryant, 2010; Mercer et al., 2010; Mroz, 2014). As was stated earlier in the paragraph, the teachers identified Jonese's impaired speech as the barrier to her learning. However, I argue that, based on my observations, it is not, in fact, a barrier located in Jonese's impairment but rather a barrier arising from teachers use of classroom dialogues more suited for children with well-developed verbal language skills.

### **October 2018 – Classroom Observation**

*During today's language class, Mrs. Mitchell read a paragraph aloud twice. The children listened only to the first reading. During the second reading they were expected to write the paragraph while the teacher read. After, the children each took turns to read what they had written. When it Jonese's turn, I observed her fearful and anxious response as she struggled to read the first word. She was not encouraged or supported. The teacher told her to sit and moved on to the other children. She complimented every other child's effort. I asked her to collect all the scripts. She said it was an oral lesson and that was not necessary. I asked her if I could collect them. I collected the children's scripts. I highlighted to the teacher that Jonese's script had neither spelling nor punctuation errors. Mrs. Mitchell told me that it was not a spelling lesson. The learning objective was for the children to reread a paragraph that was read to them [Field notes, 2018].*

As I mentioned in the paragraph before the data extract, Mrs Mitchell's approach to the lesson emphasised Jonese's impairment rather than highlighting her spelling and punctuation skills. This practice of highlighting the impairment rather than the children skills, I observed in (almost) all the classrooms. When Mrs. Mitchell told me that it was not a spelling lesson, she seemed to indicate that important skills which were necessary in the lesson and which were possessed by Jonese were overlooked because the focus was on the superficial skill of rereading a paragraph. Rereading the paragraph was through memorisation rather than language skills and indicate the practice teaching in a manner in which highlights impairments. The children could have memorised the passage after hearing it several times from Mrs Mitchell and their peers. In telling me that it is not a spelling lesson, Mrs. Mitchell justified Jonese exclusion through framing

Jonese's spelling and language skills as inapplicable to the current lesson. Mrs. Mitchell situated herself as embedded in ableism discourses rendering Jonese powerless by the discrimination in her classroom. Mrs. Mitchell's response also points to her stance on external support through indentifying me as someone who had not stayed in their lane. She framed herself as the authority on Jonese needs which then nullified her earlier constituted identify as a powerless non-specialist. Mrs. Mitchell also showed her discriminating stance with reference to the learning objective. She emphasised that her treatment of Jonese was based on her planning and could not be contested since she was now seen as a specialist at excluding some children due to the way she frames learning objectives.

## **5.4 Religious and Cultural Interferences**

*I hate myself. If I were not going to burn in hell, I would have killed myself. I wish my father could perform a religious ritual and correct my speech impairment.*

Prem September 2018 - Interview

I now turn to questions of religious and cultural influences on the experiences of children with SEND. In Guyana, the law guarantees religious freedom, which is protected by the People's New Constitution Guyana (1980). Despite this guarantee, children with SEND face marginalisation caused by religious discourse, cultural beliefs and associations. Prem, like Jonese, suffered from a speech impairment. His experience was further complicated because he was a Pandit's son. Almost all the children were afraid of him. They believed that if they offended Prem, his father would do something evil to them, such as giving them impairments. It is culturally and religiously accepted in Guyana that Pandits have spiritual powers, which they can either use for good or evil. Prem internalised the negative emotions directed at his father, which resulted in him developing poor self-esteem and avoidance of socialisation.

Prem was in Grade Six and, like (almost) all the children in Grade Six who participated in the study, he was inscribed in and caught up a discourse of fear contingent on failing the upcoming National Grade Six Assessment, which was exacerbated because he had already failed the Grade Two and Four national assessments. The teachers ignored

Prem's speech impediment because, as was stated with Jonese, they felt specialist amelioration was necessary.

**December 2018 – Participant Observation/Interview Prem, (*Crying and stuttering*)**

*I hate myself. If I were not going to burn in hell, I would have killed myself. I wish my father could perform a religious ritual and correct my speech impairment. I wish the children did not fear my father. He is not a bad man all the time. I wish I could talk properly. I wish I were not always alone. At night I pray to Lord Shiva for a friend. I wish my teachers could help. I wish I could pass the National Grade Six Assessment. I wish I could read it correctly. When we go Mandir, I know daddy wish I could read the holy book and I know he is a shame that I cannot read it.*

Prem's expression indicates a child in despair based on self-hate. His consideration of suicide, only being only inhibited by his extreme religious fear of hellfire<sup>3</sup>, is an expression of great unhappiness. Unhappiness is framed as the outcome of each alternative, committing suicide and burning in hell or staying in school and suffering torment daily. Prem's expression is worrisome because of the prevalence of child suicide in Guyana. His sentiments suggest that he wants things to be different but is subordinated as powerless to change his situation. Prem's despair and loneliness is exacerbated by the lack of friends in school and his unanswered daily prayers for Lord Shiva's intervention. Unanswered prayers result from spiritual and religious abandonment. Prem framed being further tormented in his place of worship due to his inability to read the religious books. His torment is also dependent on his belief that his father is ashamed by his inability to read as well as his impairment. He further wished his religious beliefs could take away his impairment.

Prem's culture and religion were the basis some of the barriers he faced (see chapter four; Situational Map 4.7). His religious family suffered from the stigma they had previously pedalled in society about impairments and its link to evil existences and practices. Prem felt he was a disappointment to his family and his religion, which portrayed SEND as an omen. Prem felt excluded in his Mandir and school. Besham was

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<sup>3</sup> Hellfire - In the Bible, Hellfire is the everlasting fire prepared for the devil, his angels and humans who do not follow the commandments of God (Matthew 25:41). Children in both schools receive religious talks about hell and hellfire at morning assemblies.

also in similar religious despair. He stated that he did not ask Lord Shiva for ADHD. This highlighted the embedded belief that Gods give impairments.

*Prem: Mr. Lashley, I will keep praying to God to save me from all this suffering [Field notes, 2018].*

Despite being unsupported and believing in the discourse that Gods give impairments, Mrs. Balram, Besham's class teacher, explained how she facilitated learning experiences for Besham.

### **Besham's Teacher (Mrs. Balram)**

*I have tried all I know to get Besham to focus and commit his attention to learning experiences. He still does not attend to expectations. I just let him be now. I get blamed by senior leadership and his parents for not keeping him engaged even when I have tried my best. So I take the blame and let him be. Both ways, I am blamed, and neither his parents nor the school assists me in supporting him.*

Individuals are inscribed in discourses around them about social issues and practices and remain subjectively attached (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Hollway & Jefferson 2005; Thomson 2009; Walkerdine et al. 2001). Furthermore, Individuals' subjective attachment is caused by their positioning within discourses (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Hollway & Jefferson 2005; Thomson 2009; Walkerdine et al. 2001). The participating teachers were inscribed in the religious and cultural discourses around them by their position as agents to transmit and maintain cultural and religious norms in society. Teachers' positions in the discourses are also highlighted in Situational Map 4.11 in chapter four. Further, Mrs. Balram and Besham are inscribed in the discourse and are framed by the thinking that children with SEND are not suited for mainstream school. According to Walkerdine et al. (2001), discourse about rules, practices, divisions and systems of a particular body of knowledge (in this research knowledge about SEND) also speaks to the importance of desire, and the role of unconscious thoughts and emotions in any given situation.

Discourses not only depict objects in various and, sometimes, contradictory ways, but they also offer positions from which a person may speak the truth about objects (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). In Besham's situation, it was Mrs. Balram's

desire to support him. From the level of a class teacher, she did try to support him. She sought out resources and guidance and deploys new strategies to support Besham. However, her position in discourses within the school was not a position of authority. As such, the pedagogical approaches, and classroom management approach, she used to support Besham did not follow mainstream schools' standardised expectations. For example, the standardised expectation is that children be quiet while working during instructional periods. However, Mrs. Balram allowed exploration in her classroom which suited Besham. During such explorative learning, it sometimes gets noisy and generates a lot of movement. The school's senior leadership disapproves of such practices as unsuitable and disorderly. The school's senior leadership attributes Besham failure to meet the standardised expectations to Mrs. Balram unsuitable and disorderly pedagogical and classroom management approach.

Besham felt abandoned by religion like Prem. Holly also had similar feelings. Holly suffered from Palpebral slant eyes and also had developmental delays, which resulted from Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. Holly was below the reading level for her age with poor phonetic skills and numerous difficulties with reading. Poor phonic skills, according to various authors (e.g. Adams, 1990; Hulme et al., 2005; Huo & Wang, 2017 and Vellutino et al., 2004), results when an individual knows the letter but lacks the understanding that a specific letter has multiple sounds. Holly was also conscious of the cultural attitudes that were at play in the school. She was aware that the children treated her differently and she blamed God and herself for the problems she faced.

### **Holly's Interview September 2018**

*I am such a failure. I wish God was not punishing me. I am in a school I do not want to be. I am always being watched funny. Every time I try to read aloud, I know the children are waiting to laugh. I cannot do this anymore. Maybe I should die. I am just a failure like my mother.*

When Holly uttered, '*I am such a failure*' it shows that she is disappointed in herself because she is not successful in school. She equates her failure with punishment administered by God. She is unhappy and is seeking forgiveness from God's punishment. She also attributed her despair and fear to her awareness of being the object of ridicule. She is subjugated to the point that she considers death as her only means to end a tradition of failure in her family. Holly was also inscribed and

embedded in the discourse which portrays children with SEND as not suited for mainstream school and that impairments are God's punishment. Holly, like Prem, considered suicide, but their religious beliefs prevent this course of action. Holly's self-blame suggests dangerous internalised torment embedded in religious beliefs. As a result, Holly endured constant fear, loneliness and being depersonalised whenever she attempted to read aloud. In summary, the argument presented in this part of the chapter suggests how religion and culture inscribed children with SEND in subjugated powerless positions which produce docile subjects who suffer negative experiences and despair.

## **5.5 Domestic Violence and Abused Children**

*I run from everything that I think will hurt me or shame me. My dad shames me a lot. He likes to shout and scream at you for nothing. He beats me too. So when I come to school and the teachers scream or shout or has a cane I think is punishment time or shaming time and I run.*

Nial, November 2018 - Interview

Nail ran from embarrassment and shaming experiences because he had experienced physical abuse at home and corporal punishment at school. The relationships of power that cause domestic violence are complex (Staeheli, et al., 2004) but are widespread in Guyana (Parekh et al, 2012). This study suggests that domestic violence has an influence on the experiences and power of children with SEND in mainstream schools (see chapter four; Situational Map 4.9) and on children who experience and witness domestic violence who do not have SEND. Teachers were also invested in the corporal punishment discourse, which normalised the use of 'lashes' which were sometimes not administered according to stated guidelines. Corporal punishment guidelines state that corporal punishment can only be administered by a senior teacher of the same sex as the child. Moreover, the administration of corporal punishment needs to be documented in the misdemeanour book and witnessed by the head teacher and two other teachers (Standard Operational Procedure, Ministry of Education Guyana, Education Act, Chapter 39:01).



Children usually experience fear starting at an early age but, as they grow older, they mobilise and deploy resources to manage and overcome it (Akmatov, 2010). However, due to a range of biological and environmental factors, some children do not adequately develop strategies, skills and internal mechanisms to manage and overcome fear. Moreover, high levels of fear can negatively affect children's ability to learn (Bledsoe & Baskin, 2014). For Nial, every time he felt fearful, he ran away from that which triggered his fears. The teachers were unsure of how to approach him because they feared he would run out of class.

### **September 2018 - Interview**

**L L:** *I called upon you because your graph is well done.*

**Nial:** *Thank You Sir. I know you would not really shame me, but I know teachers do it, and I started getting scared. So I ran. I hope you are not mad at me.*

**L L:** *No, I am not mad at you. Tell me about some of the things you are afraid of in school.*

**Nial:** *Everything. Ahhh!! Everything that I think will hurt me or shame me. My dad shames me a lot. He likes to shout and scream at you for nothing. He beats me too. So, when I come to school, and the teachers scream or have a cane, I think it is punishment time or shaming time.*

**L L:** *Why does your dad scream a lot?*

**Nial:** *He says we never do anything right and we stubborn, but this is mostly when he drinks alcohol or in the morning when my brother and I do not help with the animals.*

According to Ford et al, (2019), severe fear and anxiety can compromise a child's mental health. In Nial's perception, home and school embraced the same philosophies and practices, which terrified him. He was humiliated or punished for making mistakes, and no one took the time to help him correct his errors. Nial's reaction in moments of fear also led to his exclusion from activities in school. He was blamed by his teachers for his exclusion because he ran out of class. However, the experiences of being constantly abused were the basis of Nial's inability to develop resources to manage and overcome feelings of fear and anxiety. Also, the severity of Nial's fears and anxieties

were intensified through being told that he could never do anything correctly along with frequent bouts of corporal punishment.

Corporal punishment is a common disciplinary practice in the Caribbean (Bailey et al, 2014) and its use is normalised in Guyanese culture (Akmatov, 2010; Gill-Marshall, 2000). Neither his father's nor his teachers' behaviour was intended to do him harm rather the intention was to compel a docile subject. I realised that the teachers neither explained Nial's struggles in school nor his fears of corporal punishment to his father. They only complained about his behaviour, which subjected him to more corporal punishment at home and this exacerbated his fear of school and his teachers.

### **Nial's Father (Mr. Grenville)**

*These boys are bad Lidon. They are stubborn. They need the discipline to grow up into strong men. They are young black boys, and I don't want my boys in crime. I work hard to provide for them. They must become somebody good. The Bible says you must not spare the rod and spoil the child, but if you say it will help my boy, I will try. He is getting big, and I think it is time I talk to him man to man and stop treating him like a little boy and always shouting at him. I see he is trying more with the schoolwork. I do check the books while he is asleep.*

Referring to boys with challenging behaviours as 'bad boys' was a normalised reference used by parents and teachers. Negative utterance in school associated the boys with the inclination to identify as 'bad boys'. The message seems to be that 'bad boys' need to be disciplined into docile subjects. This was a cultural and religious discourse and practice in which the behaviour of Mr. Grenville was embedded. It was embedded in the biblical verse in Proverbs 13:24, which frame corporal punishment in this way. Mr. Grenville equated Nial's fear with respect. He neither intended for it to be abuse nor realised when his sons, especially Nial, saw him as someone to be feared. Mr. Grenville was one parent who accepted a change in his practice which goes against the expectations of the dominant corporal punishment paradigm for bad behaviour. Nial's fear affected his experiences at school, but his issues and behaviours were not classified as SEND but simply as deviant behaviour. In regard to this, research has found that children with emotional issues and deviant behaviours are vulnerable in Guyana to neglect, marginalisation and discrimination because these behaviours are not classified as a SEND (Cheong et al, 2018, Lashley, 2017).

Arif and Arifa shared similar experiences to Nial. Their father abused their mother and kept them away from school. As a result, they were not registered for school until Grade Five and Six and such late registration has been found to cause not only learning difficulties for pupils but also organisational challenges for teachers in the classroom (Ferguson, 2017; Hightower et al., 2011; UNESCO, 2005). Arif's and Arifa's late registration frustrated the teachers as they were left unsupported to accommodate Arif and Arifa. This feeling of frustration is problematic because, according to Hirsch et al. (2008) and Moir et al. (2010), teachers who had left the profession cited a variety of reasons, including lack of support from school leadership, lack of empowerment, feelings of isolation, and undesirable teaching assignments. At one of the staff meetings, the Grade Six teacher, Mrs. Wilson, whose class Arif had been placed in, had become so frustrated that she stated that the system would kill her.

**Mrs. Wilson:** *This education system will kill me. They are treating my class as a dumpsite. Every slow dunce, challenging, and struggling child is dumped upon me.*

Besides having a large class of mostly 'slow dunces' as she directly referred to the children; she now had Arif. The comparison of the placement of children with SEND in her class to dumping refuse constitutes these children as unwanted waste. Her statement is verbally abusive and the perception of children as unwanted and disposable is discriminatory and leads to their exclusion. Mrs. Wilson's remarks were not just reflections of her frustrations in the classroom, they were also an indication that she was overwhelmed by the discourses and practices in education. As a newly qualified teacher, she was not trained to handle such a class. It was also her first experience at Grade Six. She was feeling pressure to produce passes at the National Grade Six Assessment and to do so with a large class. Her indicated desire to leave was seemingly caused by the system's lack of care for teachers. She was worried about the students who might fail as this would render her a failure as a consequence of the exchange of power between the supported and unsupported.

Mrs. Wilson, as well as three other teachers, informed me that Marcy was sexually abused. One of the teachers was so concerned that she feared that she might commit suicide.

### **Miss Short (Marcy's preparatory teacher)**

*'Marcy was joyful and loving. She was a helpful pupil. I used to listen to the funny way she spoke. She was a hard worker and tried very hard despite her weaknesses, especially her poor phonological skills. She never used to let her short leg affect anything. She used to run races at sports time and all that. Since that thing happened to her, she is a ghost of herself. She is always sad. I no longer see that joyful innocence in her eyes. I think she blames herself. It saddens me. I often get scared for her and think she may commit suicide.'*

Research indicates that sexual abuse takes away an individual's power and is a strong predictor of future psychiatric problems (Rees et al, 2019). Mrs. Short's reference to Marcy's sexual abuse as 'that thing which happened to her' situates her identity as separate from the abuse and the effects on the child despite saying she was now a ghost of herself. However, being a ghost of herself likely to be the result of her psychological problems (Rees et al, 2019). Mrs. Short's reference to Marcy's sexual abuse as 'that thing which happened to her' also separates Marcy from the negative impacts of the experience. The reference seems to suggest that Marcy chooses to live with the effects of her abuse in school.

Further to the above, research has found that disabled children can be particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse (Helton et al., 2017; Radford et al., 2011). Marcy had a physical impairment in her left leg, which made one leg slightly shorter than the other. She also had weak phonological skills because of the extremely traditional subculture in Marcy's village. The villagers spoke sub-dialects of the Basilect level of Guyanese Creolese (see chapter three – Transcribing Issues). The teachers blamed this spoken form of the language for Marcy's weak phonological skills. Marcy showed signs of depression, impaired ability to cope with stress, and deep self-blame and guilt. In fact, Marcy showed all the indications of psychological problems which are associated with abuse as described by Rees et al, (2019). Further, she was being bullied.

### **Marcy's Interview**

**Marcy:** *Mi nah amazing no more and everybody talking seh a mi fault it happens to me. Dat mek mi sad and mi stay bi miself. It pains bad mi want dead it gun stop den. (I am not amazing anymore and everybody blames me for what*

*happened to me. It makes me sad, and I stay by myself. I wish to die so that the pain will stop.)*

Marcy was also in despair and the negative impacts on her self-esteem were likely to be the result of being abused. Marcy's perception of herself changed to self doubt. This happened because the discourse around her framed her as responsible for being abused. She was aware of the negative utterances about her by teachers and other pupils. The awareness of others' perception of her is reflected in the statement, '*Mi nah amazing no more and everybody talking seh a mi fault it happens to me.*' She often indicated to me that she seldom understood her feelings. She (almost) always appeared to be in a confused emotional state.

*I encountered Marcy sitting by herself looking confused and crying. I am unsure of what to do or say. I greeted her but she just looked at me and carried on crying. I sat with her in silence and after a while she stopped crying. She smiled at me and left [Field notes, 2018].*

Marcy's feelings of valuelessness were dependent upon negative socialisation experiences in society, which filtered into school after her experience of sexual abuse. Marcy's situation was a very precarious one because she expressed suicidal thoughts like many other pupils, especially Triscia. As well as suicidal thoughts, Triscia was angry. Research on victims of abuse suggests that individuals sexually abused in childhood are more than twice as likely to consider committing suicide in later life (Allnock et al., 2009; Calder 2010; Helton et al., 2017; Radford et al., 2011). Moreover, Guyana has been ranked among the top five countries in the world for the rate of suicide, some of which are linked to sexual abuse (World Health Organisation, 2018).

### **Triscia's Angry Statement**

*I was happy and innocent until he touched me. I used to love and respect him. My family trusted him. He made me untouchable and nasty with the vile act he did to me. ail is just the solid bars which hold his body. However, he roams freely in my mind and memory. He is consuming me. My thoughts, my actions, my life is no longer innocent and free. It is shackled with pains, hurt, anger, and I feel nasty. He is behind bars, yet I am the prisoner.*

*I can never trust another male, for I will not be hurt again. All males are my enemy, and I must protect myself before they hurt me. I know it is wrong, but my safety comes first. Nobody knows how I feel. Nobody can share my experiences because they do not honestly care. My sister, my teachers, and my friends, nobody can either help or save me. He made me untouchable and nasty with the vile act he did to me, and it cannot be reversed.*

*I am furious, and I cry every night. I am so disappointed in me. I did not understand what was happening to me. He took advantage because I have a disability. I am hurt bad, and now I am harming others. I see their pain, but it is not equal to mine. So I stay by myself because only Triscia knows how I feel.*

Triscia's descent from happiness into despair was clearly contingent on her being abused. She highlighted the magnitude of the betrayal and unhappiness. She stated that the betrayal hurt significantly because she knew and trusted her abuser. Her statement, *'I used to love and respect him'* frames this betrayal. It points to further subversive activity that betrayed her family and the betrayal she feels through her family's trust of the one who hurt her. These are overwhelming emotions for Triscia, which left her in agony and in an imprisoned state of thought and body without physical shackles and bars. The prison metaphor in her statement compares her imprisoned state to her abuser being free while she is the abused victim who is held captive.

Further, the betrayal caused by her abuse developed overlapping emotional and relational issues with males. By stating, *'All males are my enemy'* she framed a declaration of war and prosecution on males. A second metaphor revealed a comparison of Triscia to a tainted product which is set aside. The metaphor is revealed in the expression, *'He made me untouchable and nasty with the vile act he did to me, and it cannot be reversed.'* She also indicated before the metaphor that no one can save her from the agony she endures. Stating that she cannot be saved also suggests her state of valuelessness and being cast aside. It also indicates that no one can save males from the wrath she will deploy through being beyond consoling.

In a third metaphor, Triscia associated her abuse to her impairment. Simultaneously, she also associated it to self-disappointment, which is constitutive of characteristic self-blaming. Triscia's self-blaming and disappointment framed how the experience of abuse shaped her confused mental state. Finally, another metaphor comparing unequal

pains to reflect her experience was used. On the one hand, Triscia wanted males to be hurt in a manner, which reflected her pain, while, on the other hand, she suggested that no form of pain can be equated to her pain. The metaphor of pain also framed her as subjugated powerless contingent on being deeply hurt.

Abuse is experienced in different forms by children. For example, Shantie and Pooran faced extremely violent and traumatic experiences. Shantie witnessed her father beat her mother to death before he committed suicide. Shantie was perceived as an average student before this event despite having mild learning disabilities. Shantie also had lost her right thumb during one of her father's abusive rages, and, as a right-handed child, this made simple tasks extremely challenging.

Research indicates that the relationship between mothers and children is a specific target for perpetrators of domestic violence and children may be manipulated by threats or inducements by such perpetrators to participate in violence (Barron, 2007; Katz, 2015; Radford & Hester, 2006; Thiara & Gill, 2012; Thiara & Humphreys, 2015; Van der Kooij, 2017). Pooran was another child who experienced abuse similar to Shantie. Pooran's father was also very abusive. Pooran's father, Mr. Persaud, incited him to violence. Pooran probably acted violently towards his teachers because he was inscribed by his father into a discourse and discursive practise which normalised perpetrating violent acts towards the females in his family.

#### **December 2018, Interview - Pooran Talks**

**L L:** *What is causing you to behave in such an unruly manner?*

**Pooran:** *It is that stupid teacha. She nah knows how to treat we with respect. She thinks because I am sitting in the special needs group that I am stupid. Somebody should slap some sense into her stupid brain.*

**L L:** *That is not an appropriate way to talk about your teacher.*

**Pooran:** *I know, but they talk about me however they want. She does talk about how my father beat my mother and killed her and how I just like my father. It is none of her business. Her business is to teach and help we and that she cannot do.*

Pooran is using the abusive language he learnt from his father to assert his dominance. While it is abusive, calling Miss Ram ‘stupid teacher’ is a learnt, verbally abusive behaviour. Being called stupid appears to stimulate a response, so he calls Miss Ram stupid in turn. However, Pooran is also trying to paint himself in a manner that is modelled on the behaviour and verbal abuse he saw his father use to manipulate and induce fear in the female in his family. Research supports this contention and has found that children are aware that the abuse is happening (Øverlien & Hydén, 2009; Swanston et al., 2014; Van der Kooij, 2017). Pooran is inscribed in the discourse of abuse and violence around him in the community. Further, he contested the stupidity association with SEND with his statement that someone should slap some sense into the teacher. He does not believe he is stupid because he sits in the SEND group and he seems to have transferred an association of stupidity to persons who treat children with SEND unfairly.

#### **December 2018, Interview - Shantie Talks**

**L L:** *Tell me about your day.*

**Shantie:** *I am having a bad day. My grandmother is sick. I have no lunch, and the entire morning the teacher was rude and insensitive. She was laughing at some lady who she heard was beat by her husband, and she knows that I am there, and my dad beat my mom to death. It hurts, teachers are not supposed to be cruel.*

**L L:** *I am sorry, but they are humans too and sometimes act insensitively.*

**Shantie:** *Look at my thumb. I cannot write as fast as I used too. I am now learning to write with my left hand. The new teacher shouted at me to write properly, and Miss just sat with the bright children and did not do anything. The teacher cleared the board, and I did not finish the paragraph.*

Research suggests that children who were subjected to abuse usually carry emotional trauma and associated fear (Humphreys, 2006; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Susmitha, 2016). Shantie is expressing her feelings of despair and hurt. In addition to her experiences of abuse, Shantie was being ignored by her teacher. As such, she also had similar experiences to other children who were ignored (see part two of this chapter). Shantie was confused by the insensitivity of those around her. Shantie



attributed Miss Ram laughing at another student's experience of domestic violence as a mockery of her. She framed it as cruel and associated it with her own negative experiences. Further, her words also frame Miss Ram's actions as practices of exclusion. For example, providing no support for Shantie since the loss of her thumb was a form of exclusion from writing tasks. Shantie's inability to keep up with the writing pace of the rest of the class reminded me of Aquennie's and Rawl's struggles. I argue that widespread experiences of domestic abuse have a significant impact on the learning and socialisation of some children with SEND. The experiences of the children with SEND who were also victims of domestic violence and abuse illustrated the impact and consequences. For most of the children, domestic violence and abuse did not just caused emotional pain but resulted in additional impairments which led to their exclusion in school.

## **5.6: Influences of Memories**

*Teachers at Saints Primary School are the same with their negative attitudes. The building is the same, and the experiences of disabled children are the same.*

Aquennie September 2018 - Interview

Aquennie was one of the children whose experiences originally triggered my interest in SEND (see chapter one). He was a pupil at Saints Primary School while I was a senior Grade Six teacher. Like Aquennie, Quan, Devi, Jasmine, Alicia, Daniel and Akon (see chapter four; Table 4C & Situational Map 4.8) found their own recuperation and overcame barriers without adjustments to accommodate their needs within mainstream schools.

### **September 2018 - Conversation**

**Aquennie:** *I was wondering if you came back to teach, but I heard some children saying you are doing research.*

**L L:** *What was the biggest barrier you faced at Saints Primary School?*

**Aquennie:** *I remembered facing challenges every day. When it was not the name-calling, it was being overlooked for competitions. I knew I could have won for the school, isolation without friends who were not my relatives,*

*uncaring teachers with inconsiderate attitudes, never completely having the notes because teachers always cleared the chalkboard and being told to give up. The barriers made school experiences unpleasant.*

Aquennie spoke about the teachers' practices of clearing the chalkboard without him getting the notes and always being told he could not keep up with the expectations of mainstream school. These were experiences that Rawl and Shantie were having a decade later. He also reported that feeling helpless and powerless as if he really did not belong in school because of the negative conceptions of SEND, negative conceptions which spanned a decade.

When children with SEND suffer academically, they become more vulnerable in a society where the dominant discourses do not accept their ability to be meaningful contributors to development (Hattie, 2005; Liu, 2018; Njelesani et al., 2018; Ramaahlo et al., 2018; Robers et al., 2010; Shaddock et al., 2007). There were many opportunities where teachers could have helped children like Aquennie overcome the barriers and challenges they faced. According to Fraser (2017) and Lashley (2017, 2019), Guyanese mainstream teachers need to develop a more positive attitude towards SEND. The failures of other children with SEND at the national assessments like Aquennie were contingent on teachers' negative attitudes. In addition, their dropping out of school was often the result of the many barriers they faced in mainstream schools and discourses that ensured their unsuitability for mainstream school is materialised.

### **September 2018 – Conversation**

***Aquennie:** The building is the same. There were many renovations, but the traditional structure is maintained like a heritage site, yet it is still not easily accessible for physically disabled children. The barriers I faced in the past are still obstacles to children presently.*

Early intervention reduces the long-term effects of impairments which include a reduction in the need for special education and repeating grades and increased school completion rates (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Haslip, 2018; Weiss & Stephen, 2009). Aquennie emphasised that most of the obstacles he faced from 2004 to 2010 are barriers which children still face presently. The experiences of children in this study support Aquennie's position, which indicates that there had been limited interventions

to help children with SEND and also suggests that children with SEND will continue to struggle in school.

Aquennie's experience frames a historic occurrence which is reoccurring in the present. One child from this study facing a similar experience is Alicia. Alicia has all the expected requirements for an ideal mainstream child, however she feels under-challenged in her class. While Aquennie experiences of lack of challenge were connected to his impairments, Alicia experiences of lack of challenge were through her teachers' feeling she ought not to be challenged beyond her Grade level. However, Alicia framed the adverse environment and attitudinal barriers in the school as opportunities and not challenges. Unlike Aquennie, Alicia was never isolated due to her flexibility in the ways she approached learning and her confidence in social settings. This observation seems to contradict research findings, which claim brilliant children are often socially isolated as well as under-challenged in the classroom (see Bianco & Leech, 2010; Fletcher-Campbell, 2003; Kennedy & Farley, 2018; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002).

#### **December 2018 - Interview**

**L L:** *Do you think this school supports you well?*

**Alicia:** *This school is a limiting place which is sometimes frustrating. If it was not for the Grade Six teacher, this place would be boring. My mom and dad challenge me at home. Daddy is at the University of Guyana doing his masters, and he lets me sit up with him and read, or he gives me work.*

The education system has a responsibility to provide an appropriate level of challenge for all children (Kennedy & Farley, 2018; Nett et al., 2016; Winstanley, 2004). Otherwise, children are likely to be under-stimulated, frustrated and underachieve (Nett et al., 2016; Winstanley, 2004). Alicia's was often disaffected by the learning process and often escape to Grade Six to recuperate from being under-stimulated and frustrated in Grade Three. Unfortunately, she was compelled by the teachers to stay in her lane within Grade Three, which created a barrier for Alicia in mainstream school, resulting in her feeling that her academic development was being hindered.

## 5.6 Final Thoughts

I set out to argue in this chapter that the inclusion of children with SEND in the two schools is, in practice, a form of exclusion. I have discussed dominant discourses and practices of the schools, which caused children with SEND to be marginalised and ignored. I have argued that being ignored, marginalised, and experiencing feelings of despair while being in school is worse than being totally excluded. I have also argued that, in terms of the educational experiences and opportunities available, being physically present in mainstream school was the best that some children could hope for. The children faced obstacles to learning due to the physical environment, the pedagogical styles expected of the teachers and limited resources. Some of the obstacles the children faced were created by the government's poor inclusion practices. I have also tried to show that the teachers were being asked to do an almost impossible job to advance inclusion, given their limited resources and adverse environment. As result of the interplay of such challenges and limited resources, children with SEND have negative experiences.

I also extended the understanding of marginalisation in the two schools by highlighting how race, stereotypical beliefs and normalised practices, religion and culture contribute negative experiences of children with SEND. Religion and culture are, therefore, key elements which influence the conceptualisation of impairments and deficits. Both schools have Christian religious associations and practices which are responsible for negative discourses concerning the placement of children with SEND in the schools and through which a culture of self-blame is promoted. Even children who were not Christians, associated their impairments with God's punishment. Further, I have argued that widespread experiences of domestic violence and abuse have a significant impact on the learning and socialisation of some children with SEND. I have attempted to show that domestic violence and abuse created other impairments which compounded the negative experiences of some children. Finally, I have reflected on my past experiences with Aquennie to show that many of the limitations in resources, the physical environment and attitudinal barriers present a decade ago were still impediments to learning in both schools at time of this study. Further, I have showed how some children cope with the deficits in the environment, challenges and attitudinal barriers, which existed a decade ago and are still actively framing present experiences.

## Chapter Six: Stay in Your Lane

*I am disabled, and I cannot walk. So I am expected to stay in my place. Accept my limitations and stay in my lane.*

Pam - November, 2018 – Interview

### 6.0 Introduction

In chapter five, I presented, the challenging experiences of the individual children with SEND under identified themes, which make up the collective experiences and feelings of the children, with the focus being on research questions 1 and 2. I argued that the inclusion of children with SEND in these two schools is, in practice, a form of exclusion. This form of exclusion is through a pervasive system of discrimination that oppresses children whose identities do not fit the normalised expectations of children suitable for mainstream schools. I also revealed that some children faced obstacles to learning, due to the physical environment, pedagogical styles expected of the teachers, racism and limited resources. I showed that the teachers have an almost impossible job, given their resources and environment. I argued that the interplay of such challenges and limited resources led to negative experiences for children.

In chapter six, I now further discuss experiences similar to Pam's (chapter five) with a continued focus on research questions 1 and 2. Pam's physical impairment, which resulted from a car accident, subjected her to imposed and restricted opportunities (a lane), which she was expected to accept with few, if any, opportunities to safely change lanes. She was neither guided nor supported to re-enter the lanes of learning and socialisation within her school. Her mother and some of the teachers constantly reminded her of the limitations and restrictions which came with her impairment. Pam's experience was not an isolated occurrence as several other children at the school had similar experiences of being restricted to fixed lanes. In this chapter, I show the ubiquity of the metaphor of lanes in the schools where I did my fieldwork. I also attempt to illustrate how restricted lanes marginalise and depersonalise children with SEND and endanger rather than preserve their safety.

Many countries have equality legislation to preserve the rights and safety of all citizens because of inequalities in institutions and organisations of society. Similarly, Guyana's

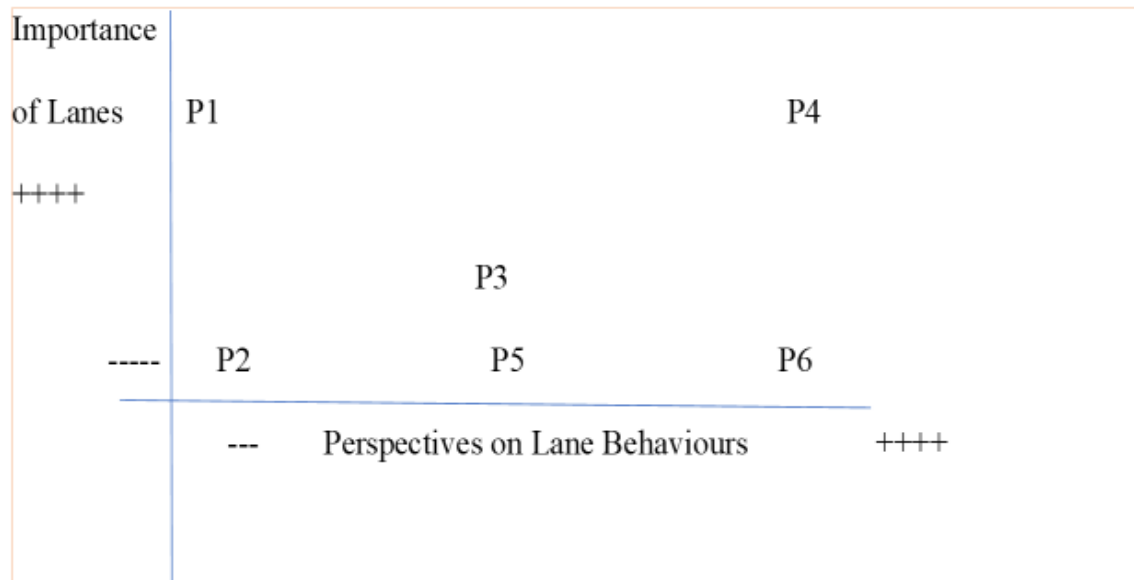
*People's New Constitution 1980, revised 2000* includes the Education Act - Cap 39:01 and the Persons with Disabilities Act 2010 - Cap 36:05, which make provisions for disabled and vulnerable people. Guyana is also a signatory to the Kingston Accord (2004) and the Petion-Ville Declaration (2013) as part of Caricom and, The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) as part of Guyana's international commitments. These accords all clearly state that all children need to be granted equal and safe access to public education. Guyana's local laws also state that any form of discrimination against any child, which denies that child safe access to education, is a criminal offence.

I begin by arguing that children with SEND are not given the same opportunities as other children in the schools under study in Guyana. I attempt to highlight the discriminatory barriers to participation and socialisation which underpin the expected status, behaviours, attitudes, participations, achievement, and acceptance of children with SEND. Secondly, I reveal how children with SEND are often told by mainstream teachers to '*Stay in their lane*'. Thirdly, I argue that the '*Stay in your lane*' directive and expectation is maintained in the value system of the school and society. To support my arguments, I present the experiences of children with SEND who were constrained to stay in their lane. I highlight their feelings with emphasis on the anxiety and loneliness they experience because of the isolation and depersonalisation created by the lane surveillance.

Finally, I reveal that teachers are not the only actors in the social world of mainstream schools who try to compel children with SEND to stay in their lane. I show that children without known SEND have also created a tiered social structure of acceptance for children with SEND, which limits the participation and socialisation of children with SEND. I further argue that the tiered socialisation structure supports the apparent accepted practice to get children with SEND to stay in their lane, which excludes them from full participation in mainstream schooling despite their physical presence in such schools.

## 6.1 Understanding Lane Marking Behaviours

**Positional Map 6.1: Perspectives on Lanes in Mainstream Schools**



P1 = Teachers – Lanes are demarcated in schools to keep are in check. Staying in your lane is a sign of discipline and respect (position held by teachers and mainstream education hierarchy).

P2 = Teachers --- Lanes maintain order in school and society. Children with SEND should stay in their assigned lanes especially in mainstream school. It will maintain school culture and order (position held by head teachers, parents and some parents).

P3 = Lanes are for safety. Lanes keep everyone in their respective positions. Stepping out of your assigned lanes is dangerous and could leads to consequences. God ordained lanes (position held by head teachers, parents, some parents, PTA, religious stakeholders).

P4 = Lanes are not required for the participating in mainstream school experiences. What is required is support and recognising that impairment does not disable someone. It does not mean they should be subjected to a lesser lane (position not held).

P5 = Children with SEND – Lanes are unfair. Lane marking behaviours are discriminatory practices and are done to directly exclude children with SEND. Lanes reminds us that we do not belong. We are unwanted.

P6 = Children without SEND – Disabled children do belong in mainstream schools. They belong in special school. Special Schools and hospitals are their correct placement lanes.

On motorways, lanes are marked and a car's position in them is regulated by law and custom. In schools, there is no physical demarcation to show lanes for different groups of children and, indeed, teachers, but their places in the hierarchy are, nevertheless, regulated. To help understand lane-marking behaviours, I share an observation of lane-guarding through the experiences of an Indo-Guyanese boy, Ramesh. Ramesh, who has SEND, was in Grade Four at Angel Primary School. He was a playful nine-year-old boy who was capitalising on the absence of supervision while the teacher was out of the classroom during the afternoon session of school and was exhibiting mild forms of inappropriate behaviour. While observing the session, I noticed, the Grade Four teacher, Mr. Stephen, who is an Indo-Guyanese male, returning to his classroom from the head teacher's, Mrs. Faith's office, seemingly upset. Other teachers I spoke to after the incident stated that the head teacher, Mrs. Faith, had reprimanded him for not having lesson plans and for stepping out of his lane. He had been reminded to *stay in his lane*. Mr. Stephen, upon seeing Ramesh, and without investigating or taking the time to observe or find out what was happening, shouted at him loudly and aggressively, (Ramesh) 'Hello! You are stupid! Why are you behaving like a monkey?'

It appeared to me that Mr. Stephen was experiencing negative emotions after his interaction with Mrs. Faith. Several researchers (see Denham et al., 2003; Pianta et al., 2005; Swartz & McElwain, 2012) have shown that high-quality teacher-child interactions, particularly concerning teacher sensitivity, contribute to children's social-emotional competence. I believed that Mr. Stephen was experiencing subordinated emotions of inadequacy created by Mrs. Faith's response to his unpreparedness and reprimand in the presence of other teachers. Mrs. Faith's public reprimand appeared to have challenged Mr. Stephen's image as a competent teacher before his colleagues. Likewise, Ramesh's behaviour also challenged his self-image as a teacher. In an attempt to reaffirm his sense of self as competent, he shouted at Ramesh, thus, passing his



challenged self-image and negative emotions onto Ramesh, who appeared to have stepped out of his lane, just as the teacher himself had been accused of doing.

As I reflect more on the occurrence that unfolded before me, I saw a cycle of events. Mr. Stephens has just been reprimanded and he then picks on Ramesh and insults him. This is totally unprovoked and suggests that some sort of distortion process is going on. This sort of psychological transference confused the children who then started self-blaming in their confused state. It also appeared to me that it's not only about staying in one's lane. Perhaps tangentially, as discussed in chapter five, it's also about a hierarchical culture that racialised and works its way down through the whole institution and the teachers are also part of this and placed within it. They offload their reprimands to the children.

The other children appeared terrified and remained silent after Mr. Stephen's outburst towards Ramesh. In my analysis of the situation, he had verbally abused a child with SEND and possibly traumatised the child with his outburst. Some children, who thought it was comical, started teasing each other during recess calling each other 'Hello! You stupid!' while role-playing the teacher's behaviour. I asked some of the children about their feelings regarding the experience. They reported being fearful and frightened by Mr. Stephen's outburst. Those with SEND appeared even more terrified because a child with SEND was the direct victim.

**Amanda:** *I feel pain bad pain in my heart. Sometimes I want to die. I may kill myself, but then it won't help me. Will it? The teachers do bad things and are never wrong. Amanda stays out of their way.*

I observed that children with SEND like Pam and Amanda avoided contact with teachers probably because they did not want to have similar experiences to Ramesh. They appeared to be trying hard to ensure that their behaviours would not upset the teachers. Ramesh said to me that if he had stayed in his lane, the incident would not have happened and, apparently, blamed himself for Mr. Stephen's behaviour.

**Ramesh:** *Mr Lashley, if I had stayed in my corner, Mr. Stephen would not have shouted on me. I did not stay in my corner and that is why he shouted at me.*

These children oppressively implicated themselves for their teacher's actions and, as Cisney & Morar (2015) and Foucault (1975, 1977) suggest, individuals are frequently

complicit in their own oppression. Causal attributions provide insights into why victimisation is related to emotional pain. Attribution theory assumes that when individuals confront a negative experience, they try to understand why it happened, and their subjective interpretations, in turn, account for their emotional reactions (Weiner, 1986 as cited in Schacter & Juvonen, 2015). Amanda and Pam were among the Grade Four children. They explained to me that they tried to understand why Mr. Stephen reacted negatively to Ramesh's behaviour. In their interpretations, they equated Mr. Stephen's action to that of victimisation and bullying.

**Pam:** *Sir is always a bully. I am sometimes scared of him. Have you seen how he makes his face when he is angry?*

**Amanda:** *Amanda is very afraid of the teacher. He is a bad man.*

Ramesh's classmates thought that Mr. Stephen's actions were harmful and undesirable. They blamed themselves for causing it. Ramesh also blamed himself for being victimised by saying that if he had stayed in his lane, Mr. Stephen would have acted differently. I tried to understand why the children were blaming themselves and avoiding direct interactions with teachers. I could not fully understand their internal analysis of the incident, but I understood that they blamed themselves. As such, this is likely to have caused these children considerable distress as self-blaming is emotionally painful and leads to more maladaptive forms of self-blame (Schacter & Juvonen, 2015; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). In addition, characterological self-blame has been associated with low self-worth and depressive symptoms, as well as risk for future victimisation (Schacter et al., 2014). Ramesh described feelings of worthlessness. It was in this moment that I reflected on whether I had stepped out of my lane as a researcher and would be forced back into it by the school's administration. In fact, shortly after this, I was told to stay in my lane by Miss Ram. Miss Ram stated that I was no longer a teacher. I was above that identity and so I need to act above it and to not worry about the classroom practices of teachers or the experiences of the children. Miss Ram wanted to inscribe a fixed identity upon me through her perception of my embodied identities.

This incident also reminded of an experience I had almost ten years ago when I was teaching remedial Mathematics to my Grade Six class during a period which was timetabled for Spanish. I did not know Spanish, and my class was weak in Mathematics

so I thought I was acting in the best interests of my class to work on their Mathematics, but I was told to play a Spanish video or something related to Spanish during the period. I was told that I did not have the authority to make the change I did, in other words I had not stayed in my lane. Being told to 'stay in your lane' within mainstream schools in Guyana is not a new phenomenon. It is normalised.

Calling a child 'a monkey' or 'stupid' is verbally abusive, victimising, and as evident in the child's statement, it gave rise to characterological self-blame. Graham et al. (2009) found that students exhibited more characterological self-blame when they were victimised in schools by someone of the same ethnicity. Ramesh is of the same ethnicity as Mr. Stephen and also the same ethnicity of a significant proportion of the student population of the school. My analysis of the incident suggests that Mr. Stephen inscribed Ramesh in a discourse which is constitutive of practices that induced feelings of alienation at school because of having impairment. The discourse deployed by Mr. Stephen constrained Ramesh to the subordinate lane which he had previously departed. He was then made to feel more like an outsider by Mr. Stephen who shared the same ethnicity as him, and he blamed himself for being responsible for his alienation by not staying in his lane.

Raz et al., (2018) indicated that behavioural self-blame might cause mental distress, which increases the severity of post-traumatic stress disorder. I asked Ramesh, '*What is your lane?*' He remarked, '*My lane is to behave like a good child and try not to upset the teachers.*' Ramesh's response suggests that Ramesh felt guilty for not displaying the behaviour the teacher characterised as good. I further asked, '*Do you think you are a bad child?*' He answered, '*I do not think I am bad, but I must be because I am disabled*', which illustrates a profound level of self-blaming. I asked again what his lane was. He said with tears, '*Disability children lane.*' At that moment, I understood the lane. I also realised that by asking the question, '*What is your lane?*' twice, I had reinforced the lane expectation, which made the child cry. I felt saddened that I had inflicted a further negative emotional experience on a vulnerable child.

Teachers exert power through various networks, systems (rules and regulations) and structures on children's perception of themselves and their experiences in school. Power operates in a net-like organisation and is exercised from multiple points (Foucault, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1980). There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain

economy of the discourses of truth which operates through, and on the basis of, this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truths (Foucault, 1980:93). The discourses that children with are exposed to produces the truths they believe. Power and knowledge are joined to effectively produce the subject (Foucault, 1976). In the schools under study, with SEND seemed to believe that having impairment restricts them to an inferior lane where they need to remain. They also seem to believe that teachers, by virtue of their power and knowledge, are just in terms of maintaining the negative lane experiences. These lane experiences in schools create a child's perception of their world and their value in that world. Experiences also influence individuals and collective social perception of their value (Chapman & Adams, 2002; Mallon, 2017; Selchow, 2017; Wolfensberger, 1972). Children with SEND accept their subordinated, subjected experiences and value on a daily basis. These experiences are terrifying daily ordeals for them, leading them to be terrified children.

The key issue that I have observed in the schools was the way some teachers depersonalised children with SEND. Terrified children with SEND and teachers' depersonalising attitudes, were likely to have caused negative emotions such as helplessness and loneliness (Koenen et al., 2019). Children experience loneliness in a school of peers when they are not valued and are devalued by the attitudes and words of teachers who are supposed to be nurturing these children's development. Children also experience loneliness when they self-blame for anything negative that is happening around them (see Raz et al., 2018; Schacter & Juvonen, 2015). Teachers' depersonalisation of children with SEND and demands that they *stay in their lane* were clearly not nurturing. The children with SEND were bemused by their depersonalisation and felt powerless, and because of these experiences, it is easier for them to do the subordinated identity of children with SEND.

Valuelessness is a profound negative core feeling which manifests itself in the conscious and unconscious mind. It is so painful that we feel as if we are worthless. Valuelessness is closely linked to and tied to guilt. Feelings of valueness can stem from traumatic experiences in childhood. Some children with SEND in my research had experienced traumatic experiences, for example, Rawl, only had the full function of his right eye and also had learning disabilities. He was depersonalised by the words of his class teacher, Mr. Rohit, who told him that it was God's will that he stayed *in his lane*.

**Rawl:** *My teacher said some of us are born to succeed and some of us are born to fail. If we are failing, we must accept that it is God's will for our lives and stay in our lane and he was referring to children with disabilities like me.*

Rawl was so powerless that he felt he had no control over his own learning or chances of success. Mr. Rohit's comments seem to suggest that Rawl, himself, is 'deficient' and further suggest that the deficiency was within him. Mr. Rohit, like many of his colleagues, seemed to believe that children with SEND, like Rawl, with their presumed deficits, were hopeless, and that neither teachers nor the children themselves could mobilise to change their state, as this was decided by God. Other children with SEND have similar experiences which distorted their identity and self-value. Rawl blamed himself for being unwanted and being depersonalised by the teachers and children without SEND. The effect on a primary school child of being told it was God's will that you fail and that you need to walk in the lane of failure is likely to be highly damaging. Children stated that it was religiously horrifying since they attended church programmes and clubs in school which frame the regime of truth constitutive of the straight and narrow lane to God and Salvation. If you are not in the straight and narrow lane, which is the correct lane for salvation, you will face destruction. The teachers imbued children like Rawl, Amanda and Pam with the belief that they were born to be in the lane of deficit. The teachers firmly emphasised that it is the God who had created them and who had ordained this rather than locating the problem in the schools' culture and practices or the teachers' negative collective consciousness. Racism was also evident in Rawl's experience (see *Marginalised by Race*, chapter five). Mr. Rohit had acquired a reputation among children for deploying racist, sarcastic remarks. Kamenopoulou (2018) found that, in the global South, there were significant barriers to learning and socialisation created by poverty and social disadvantage such as racism.

**Amanda:** *Nobody is helping Amanda. Nobody likes me. Everybody tells me I am a curse. I have accepted it, and I am staying in my corner out of their way.*

Amanda internalised that she was a curse and that the curse was the reason she received negative treatment and experiences. Similarly, Pam thinks her disability was an affliction from God.

**Pam:** *Yea. I am disabled, and I cannot walk. So I am expected to stay in my place. Accept my limitations and stay in my lane. Maybe is indeed God's will.*

Many other children with SEND, namely Latchman, Ravi, Pooran, Shantie, Arif, Arifa, Bobby and Jonese, have accepted that they were to stay in their lanes because they had physical deficits and they did not have what was required to safely change lanes. As was described by Finkelstein & French 1993; Harpur 2012; Mitra, 2006; Roush & Sharby, 2011; Shakespeare 2014; Shakespeare et al, 2009 some children with SEND continue to feel valueless. Some teachers seem unwilling to acknowledge the role they have played in affecting the mental well-being of vulnerable children and their perceptions of themselves. There seems to be no consideration of how their actions and depersonalising attitudes may affect the future self-image of these children as they interact in society outside mainstream school. The following excerpt from an interview with one of the teachers illustrates attitudes to children with send:

**Miss Johnson:** *The experiences children with SEND have in my class are only negative because their expectations are beyond the reality of their capacity and what the school can provide.*

The argument here seems to be that, because of their impairments, children with SEND could not expect a lot from mainstream schools and teachers. Like several other teachers, Miss Johnson believes that children with SEND have a lower capacity and they need to accept the situated reality. They are unable to change lanes and overcome lane restrictions.

**Miss Singh:** *I have seen Grade Six children with SEND cry about being bullied by peers, feeling humiliated by teachers, feeling frustrated and ignored and not accepted because they are just confused during learning experiences. The disabled children have more needs and sensitivities and do not know their place which creates some barriers to their learning experiences and socialisation in mainstream school.*

Similarly, Miss Singh seemed to believe children with SEND had too many additional needs and did not know their places and, further, that the teachers need to ensure they accept such places. The teachers seem to be telling the children with SEND that the education system is not about opportunity for growth or even learning. As Foucault (1975, 1977) argues, schools establish a disciplinary regime, in this case ensuring the children with SEND behave in a particular way in order that they slot into society and into the roles expected of them because of their deficits, in other words, that they stay

in their lane. Miss Singh seems to be framing that the problems, challenges and barriers encountered by the children with SEND are the result of their limitations (Bingham et al., 2013; Braathen, Munthali & Grut, 2015; Bunbury, 2019; Palmer & Harley, 2012; Rees, 2018) and that they are independent of the school environments. This implies that teachers cannot mitigate the students' difficulties in the classroom (Blustein, 2012; Brittain, 2004; Terzi, 2004), so children with disabilities need to remain in their lanes.

Another aspect of teachers framing that the problems encountered by the children are constitutive of their limitations is that some teachers seemed to think that children were responsible for teachers' actions, which depersonalise them. Teachers often suggest that disabled pupils 'make them treat them in the ways that they do' – again attributing power to pupils that they do not have in the mainstream school environment. I argue here that teachers are just trying to escape taking responsibilities for their contribution to the powerless and undervalued nature of children with SEND in mainstream schools. Attributing illusory power to the children with SEND further implicate them for the experiences they endured. All my observations revealed that the power the teachers sometimes attribute to the children with SEND is the same power the daily deny children with from accessing in school. I have stated before how teachers marginalise children with SEND and in the marginalising experience attribute the power which created the barriers and marginalisation of the children with SEN/D. Miss Johnson and Miss Singh reemphasise how teachers implicate children with SEND in their oppression by attributing power to them with words when in the actual situation and experiences they directly prevent children with SEND from acquiring power.

Some teachers seemed to have other negative emotions towards children with SEND, which reduced teacher sensitivity in interactions with such students. Student alienation due to teacher depersonalisation can undermine teacher-student relationships (Stuhlman & Pianta, 2002 as cited in Koenen et al., 2019). This could also explain why children with SEND expressed opposition to mainstream teachers and why there was mistrust of some of their teachers (see chapter seven). Students' mistrust for teachers indirectly hurts their socio-emotional and academic development (Becker et al, 2015; Keller et al, 2014; Roorda et al, 2011).

Teachers need to facilitate their students' learning and development of independence and autonomy. Initial teacher training in Guyana emphasises Erikson's (1950) theory of

psychosocial development, which is taught in an entire module and is also integrated into several other modules at the teacher training college. Following Erikson, teachers are supposed to guide students in their development through the inevitable psychosocial conflicts they face. In relation to this, the children in the current study were located within stage four of their psychosocial development: 'industry versus inferiority'. According to Erikson, the basic strength of this stage is competence. The child who is ill-prepared or lacks the tools for learning from life's experience will experience despair. A successful resolution to these crises at this stage will require preparation at earlier stages. Erikson used the term "inertia" (as in *inert*, or *passiveness*) to define the core pathology, the antithesis of competence. However, for most children, this is a period of relative calm, as it was in Freud's exposition (Erikson, 1950). Inner conflicts (at around 9-11) give way to increased learning and mastery of the skills needed to succeed in later life (Erikson, 1950). Through socialisation within mainstream schools, children could develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments and abilities. Teachers are expected to practice these principles in their classrooms and are expected to positively influence children by encouraging and complimenting children's efforts so that they can develop a feeling of competence, belief in their skills and themselves.

Practices in the classrooms of the two schools revealed that parents, teachers, and peers depersonalised children with SEND. Teachers seemed to help create many of the conflicts and crises children with SEND faced and did not assist by helping them to overcome these challenges. By being told to stay in your lane, students were probably discouraged and made to doubt their abilities to be successful. They were seldom praised or encouraged and this can be associated with the development of feelings of inferiority. The feelings of inferiority described by Rawl, Pam and Amanda, affected their daily lives in mainstream schools and is likely to have other negative implications on their learning and socialisation. For example, some researchers (Andreou et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2014) have argued that feelings of inferiority can lead to loneliness and despair.

A social-constructivist perspective on teachers' emotions suggests that these are embedded and expressed in daily social interactions and relationships with specific others, including students (Split et al., 2011; Stroet et al., 2013; Zembylas, 2007). I observed teachers expressing negative emotions while they interacted with children. Some teachers noted that children with SEND were not always the direct cause of the



negative emotions they expressed. As shown in chapters five, eight and nine, other stakeholders in education, such as parents and the Ministry of Education bear responsibility for these negative emotions. Some teachers presented themselves as powerless to include children with SEND because of resources scarcity. Resourcing learning is important but need not be dependent upon teachers' ability to finance from their personal budget.

### **Focus Group Discussion, 2018**

**Miss Johnson:** *I stopped spending my money since the last time the parent told me that if I think all children are intelligent like me. Some children are not meant to learn. This was a parent of a child with SEND verbally abusing me on the streets on my way home from work, and the school's administration did nothing [October 2018, Field notes].*

**Miss Johnson:** *Parents and teachers need to acknowledge that sometimes that which we feel is negative is not always negative. We are all saying that the children with SEND feel marginalised and frustrated among other negative feelings. Negative feelings sometimes strengthen us and build our resilience. The children will benefit even if it is only a little in mainstream schools. So, despite their negative feelings, there is a rainbow beyond the rain [October 2018, Field notes].*

Several other teachers shared the same sentiments. They seemed to think that negative feeling sometimes help in some way to produce stronger children with SEND. They seemed to feel that publicly depersonalising children with SEND was a useful practice to develop resilience.

### **Focus Group Discussion, 2018**

**Mrs Singh:** *I avoided Latchman in the corridor. He is just wasting time in school. He will be a farmer like his father. Since his mother committed suicide, he has just got weirder. I was happy when he completed Grade Five and he was no longer my problem.*

**Mrs Ram:** *I do not know why the boy Latchman does not wash his clothes properly. He upsets me. I had to tell him off in class. I hope by doing it publicly,*

*it will make him change. The seasoning smell gave me an immediate headache when I entered the class. He does not learn anything and makes the class smell. He also affects the learning of other children, and the seasoning smell is just too much for them. I had to tell him off. He cried, but I was not concerned because he needs to know. I do not know if he did any work because I did not even want to touch his books.*

These experiences are unlikely to contribute to the development of resilience rather enforce the principles of the untouchables. Children with SEND expressed conflicting and negative feelings and realities. During the course of our conversations, ten out of thirty-eight participants mentioned that they had considered suicide. All showed signs of negative emotions such as helplessness, valuelessness, low self-esteem, anger, hatred, loneliness or despair. Latchman, Holly and Ravi had considered suicide immediately after being publicly embarrassed by their mainstream class teacher. Also, Belie, Sabrina and Rosemary, as well as Amanda, often spoke of suicide during interviews. Mary and Tricia were also publicly humiliated as well, although their teachers were aware that they were sexually abused and also spoke of committing suicide. Indeed, while I was writing this chapter, a child with SEND from one of my research schools, but not from my sample, committed suicide. While speaking to Latchman, I felt scared and uncertain and questioned my inability to recognise such experiences in my students while I was a senior mainstream teacher. My inability to recognise experiences like Latchman's was probably because I had shared the same perspectives as other teachers and I was staying in my lane as I was told to do.

### **Latchman's Interview, 2018 – Learning Disabilities and Social Stigmas**

**L L:** *Hello Latchman, I was searching for you. Can I sit beside you?*

**Latchman:** *You want to sit with me, Mr Lashley? Nobody does want to sit me. [Would you like to sit with me, Mr Lashley? Nobody ever wants to sit with me.]*

**L L:** *How are you feeling today?*

**Latchman:** *The teacha bused me out. She cursed me out and told me how I stink up the place. She did have to do that in front of all dem children. Dem laugh me bad. [The teacher insulted me. She cursed me. She told me I smelled. They all laughed at me because the teacher insulted me publicly.]*

Latchman's utterances clearly expressed loneliness and despair, revealing hurt and pain experienced at school at the hands of teachers.

**L L:** *What do you have there?*

**Latchman:** *Mi trying to write. Maybe if I write dem insults gone done. [I am trying to write. Maybe if I write properly, I would not be insulted anymore.]*

**L L:** *What insults?*

**Latchman:** *Teacha insults. Children insults. People insults. Mi always gets insulted. Thomas uses to beat me up, and nobody listens to mi complains. Maybe, Mi born fu get insults. Mi miss mi mudda. When mi mudda been a living dem insults was not so bad. [Teacher's insults. Other children's insults. People's insults. I always get insulted. Thomas used to beat me. Nobody listens to me when I complain. Maybe I was born to be insulted. I miss my mother. When my mother was alive, I was not insulted so badly.]*

**L L:** *Tell me more about your school experiences.*

**Latchman:** *School neva good to me. Mi was always getting shame up. Nah, learn none. Smell stink. Teacha nah want mi in dem class and nobody mix with me. [School experiences are always bad for me. I am always embarrassed. I do not learn anything. I smell and stink. The teachers do not want me in their class, and nobody wants to socialise with me.]*

An already vulnerable child was expressing that mainstream school was never a good place for him. This troubled me because I wondered if I had contributed such feelings upon children while I was a mainstream teacher with a limited understanding of SEND. I tried to take Latchman's mind off the negatives of mainstream school by playing a game with him. It was only brief because he immediately started to express that he was deeply scared and in despair that things would get worse.

**L L:** *I understand, let us play a game.*

**Latchman:** *You want to play too.*

**L L:** *Yes*

**Latchman:** *Thanks, Sar.*

**L L:** *Everything will be fine.*

**Latchman:** *Nah sar. Nothin is nah going to be fine. Mi scared. Nobody will talk to me when you gone. [No, it will not be fine. I am scared. Nobody will talk to me when you not around.]*

Latchman expressed that he was in turmoil at school. School seemed to be exacerbating his challenges while simultaneously stripping him of any confidence he had in his abilities to contribute to society. Latchman had not developed resilience instead he had developed despair. He seemed to have negatively internalised his valuelessness, which produced thoughts of self-harming and feelings of despair. With regard to such feelings, Collinsa et al. (2017) argue that alienation due to teachers' depersonalisation of children can lead to problem behaviours in elementary schools.

While socio-emotional and behavioural problems which are internalising problems are characterised by depressive, anxiety-like symptoms and social withdrawal (McMahon, 1994 as cited in Pakarinen et al., 2018). Boyo, Akeen, Akon, Amanda, Junior Bob, Holly and Rawl received severe corporal punishment because they expressed oppositional behaviours (see chapter seven and five). They, as well as other children with SEND, seemed to be directly and indirectly harmed whether they internalised or externalised socio-emotional and behavioural problems. It is worth noting here that the same teachers who constituted depersonalised identities on vulnerable children also administered corporal punishment.

Some teachers appeared to ignore the feelings expressed by children. The 'Stay in your lane' practice was also sometimes extended to the children without SEND when they were considered to be acting out of character, which sometimes meant performing like a child with SEND. While the children were frustrated, it needs to be acknowledged that the teachers were also frustrated because of the demands created in a learning environment with limited support.

**Mrs. Archer (teacher):** *I do not listen to their feelings about their experiences. This is not because I do not care about their feelings but because I want to have a clear mind to provide experiences for these children. I feel negative emotions about teaching because of being unsupported and given limited resources. It is placing me in a challenging situation to deal with children who are challenged, and the environment further challenges them. All this challenge leads to frustration. I know these children feel frustrated and I am frustrated.*

Several studies on the emotional health and well-being of young people have reported that behavioural disorders affect about 7 per cent of those aged 9–15 years and clinically-diagnosed mental disorders affect 10 per cent of 5 – 16-year-olds (Ford et al., 2003 as cited in Coombes et al. 2013). The emotional health and well-being of the children with SEND who participated in this study were found to be affected by their experiences in mainstream schools. This was evidenced in their isolation, and thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

Children who have emotional or behavioural problems are likely to have overlapping problems across different areas of their health and development (Coombes et al. 2013; Gillberg, 2010; Minnis, 2013; Pritchetta, Nowekb, Neillb & Minnisa, 2014). I did not directly investigate overlapping problems facing children with SEND. However, I did observe overlapping problems with learning and socialisation among the thirty-eight participating children. I observed that they were deprived of meaningful school experiences not merely because of impairment, exceptionalities or having additional learning needs but because of negative emotional experiences exacerbated by their unsupported mainstream school placement. A number of researchers (Ainscow et al, 2010; Ainscow and César, 2006; Ainscow, 2010; Andrews and Frankel, 2010; Barriga et al., 2017; Florian, 2012; Singal, 2016 & Tomlinson, 2017) have stated that there are too many children with SEND who are deprived of an education.

It seems reasonable to argue that restricting children with SEND to inferior lanes in the two mainstream primary schools studied framed the quality of their experiences and socialisation.

***Macy:** Mr Lashley, today I volunteered again to solve a problem in mathematics, and the teacher shot me down. Telling me, I know that you cannot do it. After two of her selected children failed, I begged for a chance, and I followed the steps, and I solved it correctly. The teacher did not celebrate my effort. She just said a disappointing ‘Thanks Macy go back to your seat now’. I do not like her. She is a wicked witch, and she does not like me.*

Macy wanted to be fully involved and demonstrated the ability to excel. She was also trying to initiate selection to be able to participate in learning experiences. She was directly ignored by the teacher who seemed to feel that she could not participate. Akeen shared a different experience but with similar sentiments.

**Akeen:** *The teacher took away my play time to please her favourite pupil. I did not do anything wrong. Every time she turned and saw me, she had a negative remark to say like: 'It had to be you. Why do you not stay in your place? You always act out of your place. You never get it right do you?', and if I tried responding, she told me to be quiet saying I am insulting.*

Whilst Akeen maintained his innocence, the teacher's response was inappropriate but also evident is her emotional distress. Her distress is part of a wider discourse on SEND and the inability of children with SEND to remain in a subordinate lane. The distress expressed by the teacher appeared contingent upon Akeen's behaviour but it was not. It was constitutive social and cultural practices of exclusion and social stratification which subordinate children with SEND which are allowed to continue and even normalised in the school. Akeen was denied his entitlement to recess by his teacher so that a child without SEND could benefit from their social superiority. He was silenced when trying to resist the oppression of the lane experience. Researchers and international organisations (see Barriga et al., 2017; Levin & Lockheed, 1993; UNESCO 2009; UNICEF, 2019) reveal concerns about the poor quality of experiences, opportunities and teaching offered to children in many mainstream schools, particularly in developing countries. This study highlights that there are considerable concerns regarding the depersonalisation of children with SEND in the two primary schools studied. There is poor quality in the two schools as well but due to depersonalisation - the ideas for support are there but they need to be woven together and connected more effectively.

## **6.2 SEND and Sin Equated**

Another discourse observed during my time in the schools was that the lane gate keeping is divinely inspired. This is because of the belief that sin is the cause of the disabilities and negative experiences of some children with SEND. In Rawls's statement earlier in section 6.1 about his teacher telling him that he must accept his impairment has God's will for his life highlights that disability as sin. It points out that his deficit is not merely in his body in need amelioration as directed by the medical model of disability but more spiritual. Only God can ameliorate spiritual deficits.

Teachers, parents and children have repeatedly echoed that only God can ameliorate spiritual deficits. It is a tacit belief. I argue that as a researcher and Guyanese educator, it would appear that we are not fighting simply a within child deficit here therefore we are fighting one that has been given by God. Who would anyone think they were to fight against the Will of God!

**Joel:** *The school is very religious, and everything is sin or disrespectful. Teachers are always right, and children must know their places. Some people are better than others. Racism is a lot, and things are just not equal. My parents taught me to accept everyone for who they are. Why can teachers here not accept children for who they are?*

Joel was inscribed in a religious discourse which subjugated all behaviours outside of the normalised ones as inappropriate or sinful. He also imbued with feelings that inequality and racism were normalised practices. Like Joel, Ceon recognised that identities are provisional. Both boys contested the assigned subordinated and dominant roles within their school. For example, Ceon talked of SEND as the result of accumulated sins and also equated the mainstream school to the cross where Jesus was crucified and perceived the mainstream teachers as his crucifers.

**Ceon:** *I did not do anything wrong. They crucified Jesus. This school is my crucifier. Let them do what they want. Tables do turn. They will come to me needing something when I grow up.*

In volume one of *The History of Sexualities* Foucault talks about a magic circle being drawn around the figure of the leper and now Ceon talks about being crucified by the school which puts him on a cross like Jesus and also draws a magic circle around him like a leper. The leper circle makes him untouchable. I am arguing that this is a desperate situation. It is to be put out of the bounds of the human and is possibly the worst thing that schools do to disable pupils and they do it a lot. Joel statement above also highlights other factors like race, religion, inequalities, impairments and everything constituted as sin or disrespect which cause children to have a leper's circle drawn around them which led to their crucifixion.

Some parents also frame the lane divisions by treating their children with SEND as though they were responsible for their impairments and disabilities or as Joel and Ceon

puts it their sins This inscribed feelings of guilty in the children. From this framed discourse, impairment seems to be seen as evidence of sin and of the individual being inherently sinful. Joseph's feeling of hatred was constituted by the discursive practices which subordinated him at home and in the community.

**Sally's son (Joseph):** *Mr Lashley, I wish my mother believed that I am valuable. She thinks that because I have a physical handicap, I have a lesser value than my sister. I am expected to accept my limitation. She says it is God's will. My sister uses this to get her way in everything. I do not hate her for it. It is my mom, and the community who made her that way.*

Mrs McDonald, a parent, during one of her many self-initiated conversations with me, reminded me about the normalised division among the children with SEND and those without SEND. Mrs McDonald seems to constrain children with SEND as docile subjects to be excluded by dominant and powerful subjects like herself, her son and the teachers. Further she inscribed the teachers as agents of her power and constitutive practices and expectation of segregation in the classroom.

**Mrs McDonald:** *My son is not to mix with them [children with SEND]. He knows his place. I am serious. I told the teachers not to allow my son to be burdened with helping those disabled children.*

To avoid guilt and punishment, some children have learnt to act as though they accept their subordinated lane designation to get around their teachers' surveillance. While this may be effective in avoiding conflicts with the teachers, it fuels the lane discourse. For some children, the lanes are to be laughed at while others find them terrifying.

**Joel:** *I sometimes do not answer the questions. It is deliberately done now to stay in my lane. The first time I failed was not deliberate.*

I would argue that often laughing about something is a defence against hurt and anger. The phrase, '*If I didn't laugh, I would cry*' reflects this view. I am of the view that Joel might be experiencing the same anxieties and loneliness as the others, but he had developed a different strategy for coping with it.



### 6.3 Lanes and Emotional Experiences: Anxieties and Loneliness

Children with and without SEND, for example Tom and Boyo (see chapter three; Table 3.2) endured varying lane-related emotional experiences like anxiety and nervousness. In addition, they seemed lonely and lost, as if they could not do what was demanded of them. It was evident in their interviews that they were unhappy, and also, that they did not want to be in mainstream school.

**Boyo:** *Sure at least you want to talk. Nobody ever talks with me. They are always shouting or quarrelling at me and telling me how I will fail. Telling me how I am letting my mother down. I am always panicking.*

Besides panicking about failing in the assessments, Boyo did not want to be isolated further. He described the loneliness as painful. Like Boyo, Tom experienced loneliness at its extreme.

**Tom:** *No one wants to be friends. I eat there by myself. I stay away from embarrassment.*

**Boyo, (Crying behind the boys' washroom)**

*Mr Lashley, I cannot do this anymore. I cannot do it. I cannot do this. It is too hard. I cannot do this work. It is just too confusing. I cannot understand any of it. I am always lost in class, and it hurts my head. I am embarrassing my mother. I cannot do. I cannot do it. The pressure is too much. The work is too complicated. I cannot do this. I want to learn, but I cannot learn. I was not made to learn.*

Boyo believes that he was not made to learn because he believes that disability is something from God. God created him with disability. He echoed Mr. Rohit's statement that God made some children with impairments, and they need to accept God's will for their lives. Other children with SEND echoed Boyo's feelings that '*I cannot do it*'. Boyo, Latchman and Ravi accepted the belief that they were made to suffer the experiences they were encountering. They accepted their perceived equated sin as making them lesser individuals. They also accepted that there are superior lanes of which they could not be a part. Thomas expressed power from his perceived superior

condition relative to the children like Latchman, Ravi, Boyo and Tom in the inferior lane.

**Thomas:** *I felt powerful. I felt good. I felt superior. I felt like I was regaining control of the school for the regular children who were here before the disabled children came.*

### **6.3.1 Changing Lanes**

I pictured a prisoner looking through the bars of his cell, yearning for freedom. As a prisoner yearns to experience life on the outside once more, similarly, children with SEND are imprisoned in mainstream schools with invisible bars, forcing them to mentally stay in their lanes. Some yearn to change lanes, but this is not an easy task. There are many barriers to overcome. Overcoming the barriers does not permanently improve one's position. One can easily be subjugated to one's proper 'lane'.

**Ravi:** *Do you think I can fit in? I want to be normal. Well, I am treated like I am not wanted or I am not of the same value as everyone else. The people in this village look at my father and me like if we are the village rejects. The teachers and children in the school treat me like the school reject. Plus, my father treats me like I am the one making things worse for us by failing at school.*

Ravi did not think he could fit into the social structure of the mainstream school and be equally included in its discourses. He revealed that he was unwanted and rejected in society. He sees himself as untouchable and an outcast because like Cassy he was made to believe that discourse. He did not want to be in mainstream schools and watch from the side-lines of the lanes to which he was assigned. He wanted to be treated humanely and be recognised in the mainstream school discourses and practices, which he perceived as unfair. Cassy shared similar feelings, as is clear from the following extract:

**Cassy:** *Cassy do not want to watch at all. Cassy always has to watch. Cassy never gets to do. It is not fair. This school is not fair. Nobody is fair. Mr Lashley is not fair.*

### 6.3.2 *Momentary Escape*

Researchers have indicated that, through stimulating and rich experiences, children with SEND can be active agents in mainstream schools and society (see Mallon, 2017; Wolfensberger, 1992, 1995b, 1995c, 1996; Wolfensberger & Glenn, 1973; Wolfensberger & Tullman, 1982). Like Ravi, Cassy, Arif and Arifa, other children with SEND yearned to escape the lane in which they were placed. There are two forms of momentary escape which the children can experience. However, Ravi, Latchman, Boyo, Cassy, Arif and Arifa, among others, were not allowed to be active agents and, for them, staying in their lane had been normalised.

The Normalisation principle (Mallon, 2017; Wolfensberger, 1992) can offer an escape for children with SEND since it proposes to treat the revealed voices of SEND children with recognition and respect (see chapter two). As was mentioned in the previous paragraph, there are two forms of momentary escape for children with SEND. The first is through enhancement of their social image. For example, Arif and Arifa achieved this form of momentary escape by doing the Rangoli designs for Diwali celebrations at school. For the period of the celebration, Arif and Arifa were acknowledged and accepted because they could do something the other children could not do. However, after the week of celebration had passed, their valorised role was stripped from them and the moment of escape became a faded experience.

The second momentary escape comes when children with SEND individually make persistent efforts at reducing the barriers they face. Some children (see chapter four; Table 4C & Situational Map 4.8 & chapter five, part five) do this by demanding to be involved, respected and seen as fully human. However, the gatekeepers of the lanes quickly extinguish this by reminding them of their impairments and perceived limitations.

**Amanda:** *I am demanding not to be treated like a class pet. I am demanding to be given work to do in school.*

Here, I argue that Amanda is making a claim to personhood in the mainstream school. Through her demands, Amanda experienced a moment of escape. In contrast, some children (see chapter five) who are intellectually capable but find school challenging because they have some kind of impairment which the teachers consider challenging; inappropriate and unmanageable do not find the escape. Akon was one of the children

who was very intellectually gifted but found school non-stimulating and socially challenging. These children with SEND create their own enabling conditions and reduce the barriers they face by ignoring the tiers of acceptance and disregarding lane discourses.

**Akon:** *The farmers are great teachers, the rice farmers over there. They are patient and teach you practically. I cannot learn the way things are taught in school. The teachers think I am a dunce and I have no future. They ignore me without care so keep me limited. I have found a bright future. It makes more money than teaching.*

Akon found his escape, but it was not in mainstream school. He found his own enabling environment in the rice fields. Unfortunately, there are few children with SEND like Akon.

**Akon:** *I talk about your work with the farmers. The farmer who was a teacher has a disabled son, and he teaches him at home like how he teaches me when I come to the fields. His son is intelligent. He can outsmart me.*

Akon framed a different discourse with the farmers' support which inscribed the farmers as more inclusive agents than mainstream teachers. Akon was confident and he engaged me about my research and spoke about it with others. He also expressed opposition to the disciplinary regimes of the school in a similar way to his school mate Ceon (see chapter seven). He contested the school's practices because he did not want to have the same negative experiences as other children with SEND.

**Alicia:** *I have learnt that in everything there will be challenges and Saints Primary is just one of the challenges. I stay in the lane the teachers set, so I do not get into trouble. Every challenge must be conquered for you to grow. I conquer every time I represent the school and win. They have no choice but to accept that I am fantastic.*

Alicia points out that children with SEND use the stay in your lane principles as a strategy to avoid being visible. Being visible with SEND gets you into trouble. Alicia also suggests a different, and dynamic, way of dealing with her challenges in a fractured mainstream school. It also suggests that even the children with exceptionalities find some of the socialisation tiers, process and practices as things

which have to be conquered. Despite all the challenges encountered in the mainstream school, some children with SEND like Daniel still appreciate being there. They stated, as did other children with SEND, that they were inhibited by the negative attitudes and discourses.

**Daniel:** *Yes I like coming to school because I get to run around and play. I do not like how some of the teachers behave. I am always afraid that they will shout on me or punish me. But at school I get to roam, and I wander about. I am not allowed to wander about at home.*

All children need to be guided and supported in developing positive emotional health and well-being. This includes developing a definite sense of self, as well as the ability to cope with stressful situations, temper, emotional arousal, to overcome fears, and accept disappointments and frustrations (Coombes et al, 2013; Osofsky & Fitzgerald, 2000). When children are subjected to daily depersonalisation and reminders to stay in their lanes, their emotional health and well-being is likely to be damaged.

## **6.4 Tiers of Socialisation beyond Moments of Escape**

According to the UNICEF Education Strategy (2019-2030), children with disabilities and other vulnerable children, such as those who are extremely poor, or from ethnic and linguistic minorities, suffer significant social marginalisation in low-income and ‘developing’ countries. This strategy covers over 150 countries, and Guyana is one of the developing countries included. UNICEF (2019) also states that at least 175 million pre-primary school-age children and 262 million primary and secondary school-age children – one in five children – are not attending school globally. Moreover, primary school completion rates have not improved since 2009 and remain around 66%. In this situation, it is likely that children with disabilities are likely to be more vulnerable

UNICEF (2019) further states that there are significant disparities of access and learning associated with wealth, location, disability, mother tongue and ethnicity. Such inequities are reflected in the ongoing marginalisation of children with disabilities. As I have shown above, the schools I have investigated had implemented a stratified and tightly-regulated system, which resulted in the marginalisation of children with SEND.

UNICEF (2019) also emphasises that ethnicity is a variable in the socialisation of vulnerable children, without mentioning their educational and familial settings. However, other research suggests educational, religious and familial settings reproduce socioeconomic status (SES) via distinct socialisation patterns in their community contexts (Snell, 2011). Research has consistently shown that pupils with SEND remain less accepted by, and may experience greater loneliness than, their non-SEND peers (Avramidis, 2010; Koenen et al., 2019). This form of marginalisation in socialisation reproduces more inequality for children with SEND.

Avramidis (2010) and Koenen, et al., (2019) argue that children with SEND are most likely to be identified on anti-social indicators. However, Avramidis (2010) also indicates that children with SEND with the pro-social characteristics of leadership and sportsmanship were well-integrated into their peer groups. I observed some children with SEND, such as Quan, Devi, Alicia and Joel, who possessed pro-social characteristics, and succeeded up to level four on the tiers of socialisation mentioned earlier in the chapter. On the other hand, Snell (2011) argues that spatially-stratified patterns in youth socialisation result in vulnerable groups becoming particularly disadvantaged. Furthermore, it is well-established that systems of social inequality reproduce across generations (Reay, 2018; Snell, 2011). Prior to the 2018 cohort, other children with SEND experienced similar forms of social inequality in 2004 to 2010 (see Aqueenie's story in chapters five).

Friendships in school provide an important social mirror which can be used to validate a child's developing self-image (Banks et al., 2018; Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003). Poor-quality friendships in school can negatively impact children social and emotional well-being (Banks et al., 2018; Perdue et al, 2009). Put simply, negative peer relations among children put them at extremely high risk of experiencing social exclusion as adults. As a result, positive peer experiences could be viewed as an educational outcome or a measure of a student's school engagement (McCoy & Banks, 2012).

Like those of Avramidis (2010) and Koenen, et al. (2019), this study suggests that those children with SEND who possessed what are considered to be significant skills are more likely to be allowed regulated access to full participation in mainstream primary schools. These children are less likely to face total rejection, barriers, discriminatory practices and other depersonalising behavioural practices. This goes a little beyond the

moments of escape. I first realised this with Joel at Saints Primary School. Despite the teachers' perception of Joel's learning disability, he was celebrated among his peers. He was respected and acknowledged as valuable because he possessed excellent cricket skills among other talents. Joel's acceptance challenged the social order of the school while demonstrating the possibility of long moments of escape from the depersonalised lane for children with SEND.

In relation to this, Ceon, who was seen as the confident, but defiant, leader of the social group of boys who played cricket, declared that they did not concern themselves with this aspect of Joel's life. The group celebrated his skills without highlighting his impairment. In relation to this, Ceon stated '*It was not as if Joel was a 'Mongol'. 'He does not have a physical disability.'*' What is unique in this context is that this particular group of boys formed a tightly-knit bond of friendship and Ceon and Joel's bond appeared to be unbreakable by any discourse or power at school or in the community. However, this form of acceptance is not wide-spread throughout the two schools and it is commonplace for Children with SEND to face multiple socialisation and acceptance challenges because they are seen as different from the conventional norms.

The number of children with SEND placed in mainstream education has increased substantially in recent decades (Ferguson, 2008; Vlachou et al., 2016). This is also true for the two schools under study. One-quarter of students with SEND have serious difficulties forming relationships with their peers in mainstream schools (see Avramidis, 2010; Banks et al., 2018; Frostad & Pijl, 2007; Koenen et al., 2019). At both schools, most children with SEND required support and guidance to form social relationships and bonds. These children told me that they were not given enabling support and guidance to develop meaningful relationships with their peers.

In relation to the above, many researchers (for example, Avramidis, 2013; Hameed & Manzoor, 2016; Koster et al., 2009; Reay, 2018; Snell, 2011) have argued that positive social interaction is essential to the full inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream education. This was evident in Joel and Ceon's social interaction at Saints and with Quan and Devi's at Angel, which involved supporting each other in challenging situations. Ceon and Joel lived in the same locality and shared the same friends in and out of school. Joel's classmates accepted him because he was a friend of Ceon, who was the class leader. Children's perception that their classmates accept them is also

essential to the type and quality of experiences the children with SEND have in mainstream schools, which is critical for the social development and personal well-being of children with SEND.

Some researchers (see Koster et al., 2009; Maciver et al., 2017) have concluded that sometimes the support children with SEND need does not come from teachers or SEND specialists or critical workers, but rather from their peers. The support children can provide for each other to enhance experiences and socialisation, and provides a permanent escape from the relegated subordinate lanes. Some researchers (see Frederickson et al., 2004, 2005; Soriano et al., 2017; Vlachou et al., 2016) argue that parents of children with SEND also recognise the placement of their child in mainstream school as a social advantage. Children with SEND need support to socialise and not depersonalised tiers that direct their socialisation into a lesser lane.

The importance of guidance and support for socialisation and the significance of the socialisation process itself for children with SEND can never be overemphasised. There are a number of complex barriers to socialisation in the two schools, which require fundamental changes in structures, attitudes, and values rather than simply guidance and support. Acceptance of children with SEND is a tiered process in both schools and children without SEND are often the controllers of the tiers of acceptance. The tiers include:

- Tier 1: Non-acceptance, just tolerance because there is no other choice
- Tier 2: Acceptance in the mainstream classes without socialising
- Tier 3: Acceptance and minimal socialisation
- Tier 4: Full Acceptance and complete socialisation

### **Tier 1: Non-acceptance, just tolerance because there is no other choice**

Children who have both physical and cognitive impairments are not socially accepted by their peers in the schools under study. Children without known SEND seem to consider the children with SEND who have both physical and cognitive impairments to be too difficult to be included in their daily social spheres. This was expressed by Thomas earlier in the chapter and is discussed in more detail in chapter seven. This finding is supported by research, which has found that disability is a leading cause of marginalisation in education (Groce & Bakhshi, 2011; Singal, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017;



UNESCO, 2010). This often makes experiences of socialisation in mainstream schools unpleasant and lonely.

UNICEF (2019) states that children with disabilities in Guyana and the Caribbean are less likely to attend or remain in mainstream schools. They have lower transition and completion rates. They do not achieve the results as their peers without SEND (Caribbean Development Bank, 2018; UNESCO, 2017; UNICEF, 2019; WHO, 2011). This is reflected in the experiences of Latchman, Holly, Amanda, Boyo and Ravi's who expressed the desire to quit school, as well as resonating with Junior, Bob and Akon's truancy, Nial's escapes from school and Bobby's feelings of being unable to cope with learning. This suggests that there is a strong possibility that they may not remain in school, achieve prime targets or transition effectively to the next level in education.

## **Tier 2: Acceptance in the mainstream classes without socialising**

In this tier, the children without SEND accept that children with SEND are placed in mainstream schools and they are recognised as part of the school. However, the children without SEND do not socialise or identify with them in anyway. At both schools, this was evident at social occasions like Culture Day, the Christmas social, concerts, Music Day and during daily recess. Latchman, Sabrina, Cassy, Ravi, Tom, Besham, Akeen, Amanda and Rawl spoke extensively of the experiences on this level of socialisation.

### **Extracts from Separate Interviews, 2018**

**Tom:** *I am sad. No one wants to be a friend. It is like everyone does not like me. My father does not like me. The teachers do not like me. The children in my class do not like me.*

**Tom:** *I do not like being by myself. It just hurt more, but no one never asks me why I am always by myself.*

**Sabrina:** *Mi nah miss non at school. Nah like mi a learn anything deh. Dem teacha nah help me and dem picnie nah like me. [I am not missing out on anything at school. It is not as if I am learning anything. The teachers do not like me. The children do not like me either.]*

I observed that children without SEND do not sit with any child with SEND in their learning groups. Even when mainstream teachers place children with SEND in specific learning groups, those without SEND do not interact with them and do not make any effort to have conversations or share activities. This suggests the social exclusion stance of children without SEND while parents of children with SEND also informed me that they had told their children to avoid interactions with children with SEND.

### **Mrs McDonald's Extract; Field Notes 2018**

*My son is my pride and treasure. I buy everything he needs in school. I always support the schools through the PTA, fundraising, community outreach and anything they ask. My husband makes regular donations when he comes home from the gold fields. All I ask in return is that my son is given support by the teachers to continue to excel. He is brilliant and always does well in his assessments. He does not like sports though. Since the ministry started the new thing of bringing all children with disabilities in the schools, the teachers do not have enough time to focus on the brilliant children. My son's performance has started to decline. He often tells me that the teachers ask him to help teach the children with Special Education Needs as they call them. I told him that it is not his job. He is to focus on his work alone. He is not to mix<sup>4</sup>. He knows I am serious because I told the teachers not to allow my son to be burdened with that. If he must continue helping, I could put him in private school. We can afford it. The donations my husband gives this school could pay the private school fees.*

Mrs. McDonald held a constant gaze on the teachers and the discursive practices in the school. She was inscribed in many powerful positions through the PTA and her production of wealth for the school. She used the acquired power to code her subjective expectations as the normalised expectation of school. However, her actions were contingent on the support she acquired in the school. The needed support Mrs. McDonald mobilised effortlessly with her powerful identity. Mrs McDonald was not the only parent who told me that she disagrees with inclusion and feels it is damaging their children's education. One parent verbally stated his dissatisfaction with the placement

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<sup>4</sup> *Mix* is a local term used in Guyana, which means "to socialise".

of children with impairments in the National Grade Six Assessment Class and blamed me for supporting the placement.

### **Elbert's Extract; Field Notes 2018**

*I need my girl child to do well in her Common Entrance Examination<sup>5</sup>. This school used to do so well at Common Entrance. Lidon you were a top student of this school. Your mother was a top student too. Lidon, you used to teach Common Entrance class very long. You were good at it also. Your children used to do very well. You used to encourage them to work hard, and we as parents believed in you. Now you come back and instead of helping the school do well again, all you are doing is supporting them with this disability placement thing now. Everything is Special Education Needs now. Lidon, you are not disabled. I expect you to understand. Lidon, you have your little brother coming up in year five. Don't you want him to do well like you, your mother and all the children you taught? Stop this nonsense and leave the Special Education thing alone. Help the school to get better results at the Common Entrance again.*

*Everybody not bright like you and passing Common Entrance is their chance. Lidon I was happy when I hear you are back at the school. First, I thought you left the University of Guyana work and came back to help your community. It is like you changed. First, you were all about doing well, and now you are about disability. If you are not helping the children pass the common entrance, go back to England or University of Guyana. All I want to hear is you helping the children pass examination again. You went to England and came back to talk about disability and more disability. Go back or help our children pass the Common Entrance Examination.*

Elbert's insertion in the discourse seemed to be intended to place me in the lane he expected. He embodied the expectations of segregation and exclusion like Mrs. McDonald. He was inscribed in a discourse which he did not fully understand and by his expression excluded his daughter. He failed to realise that his daughter was being supported because the school realised she had dyscalculia. He thought his daughter just

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<sup>5</sup>. Common Entrance Examination was the first name given to the Year Six assessment examination. It later became known as the "Secondary School Entrance Examination", and now it is called the "National Grade Six Assessment".

needed help to pass the examination and need not socialise with children with SEND. He failed to acknowledge that the fact that his daughter required additional support meant she had a special education need. Berlinski, Duryea, Castillo, & Freitas (2019) state that parents' responses to questions about their children may be particularly averse if they believe the questions to be stigmatising or if they refer to impairments rather than difficulties. Probably, Elbert and his daughter were fearful that the other children may no longer want to socialise with her if she was identified as having SEND, or, he may only have considered children with visible impairments as having SEND

### **Tier 3: Acceptance and minimal socialisation**

This tier is slightly better for children with SEND. It involves being accepted by peers without SEND but with little/minimal socialising. Socialisation is limited to the amount required for learning experiences, school assemblies, and sharing facilities and resources such as the canteen and computer room. On this tier, children with SEND at both schools felt that they were a part of the schools despite knowing that children without SEND had not entirely accepted them as equals. Daniel and Belie were on this tier.

### **Tier 4: Full Acceptance and complete socialisation**

The final tier of acceptance is '*Full Acceptance with all socialisation benefits*'. This tier is only for a selected few, and is reserved for the elite group of children with SEND at the two schools. At Saints Primary School, it was evident that Joel had been admitted to this tier along with his friend Ceon, who were skilled cricketers, and at Angel Primary, Premchand, the computer wizard in a wheelchair, also occupied this tier. This tier of acceptance includes children with SEND who possess skills, talents and knowledge that make them very important to the children without SEND. It also includes children with SEND who are exceptionally gifted and intelligent, such as Quan, Devi, Alicia, and Akon.

The form of inclusion practised in the two schools needs action beyond simple placement of children with SEND in mainstream education. Otherwise, this can be more detrimental than non-inclusive practice. Moreover, this approach fails to take advantage of the benefits of student diversity within the learning environment.

Exposure to children of all types, on a daily basis, allows staff and students to see that, just like themselves, children with SEND have strengths and weaknesses, and good days and bad days (Singal, 2016; Soriano et al., 2017; Tomlinson, 2017; Westwood & Graham 2003). Therefore, the inclusion of children with SEND in the two schools has benefits for all groups and levels of children as well as for the teachers.

## 6.5 Final Thoughts

In this chapter, I have argued that there are clear discriminatory boundaries to participation and socialisation, that is, to inclusion, while also discussing the expected behaviours, attitudes, modes of participation, achievement and acceptance for children with SEND. I have revealed how children with SEND are often told by mainstream teachers to '*stay in their lane*' and how children without known SEND participated in, and reinforced, social structures of non-acceptance of children with SEND in ways that limited their full inclusion. In addition, I have highlighted that the seeming quest to get children with SEND to *stay in their lane* meant that they remained excluded from school life despite being physically present in mainstream schools.

As was mentioned in the introduction, lanes can have positive aspects as they can be demarcated for safety and guidance. Lanes can even help to support socialisation by connecting children. However, the only time children with SEND in the two schools need to be expected to stay in any lane is when they are queuing up following learning instructions. Lanes, borders and boundaries need to be porous, flexible and accessible to all. Even on the motorways where lanes are demarcated, all road users can access the lanes whether to overtake temporarily or to change direction because their destination has changed.

Similarly, children with SEND in the two schools could be allowed to move freely among the lanes and tiers of socialisation and not be subjected to depersonalising and marginalising *lane directives* and surveillance. Children with SEND need experiences in schools, which do not contribute to their perceptions of valuelessness or feelings of loneliness in their spheres of socialisation. In relation to this, research suggests that the most explicit and blatant exclusion processes on the grounds of disability take place in schools (Calderón-Almendros, 2018) while a significant number of school children continue to be subjected to unfair and discriminatory treatment in mainstream schools

(UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017). This situation is reflected in the two schools investigated in this study where at least some children with SEND are not given the same liberties as other children.

## Chapter Seven: Expressing Opposition

*I feel the teachers are insecure and their lack of teaching ability makes them insensitive to children challenging them.*

Joel, July, 2018 - Interview

### 7.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that children were subjected to the stay in your lane discourse and the discipline and surveillance that went with it. I also attempted to show how children with SEND are excluded within these schools, while supposedly being included. In this chapter, I argue that this situation is produced by the competing discourses in the field of inclusive education in Guyana. On the one hand, there is the Government's decision that children with SEND need to be taught in mainstream schools. On the other hand, there are discourses of resistance used by children both with and without SEND and other discourses, from teachers and parents, which present children with SEND as unsuitable for mainstream education..

In the next section, I present some of the complaints and resistance of children with emphasis on the experiences of Ceon and Thomas. I show how the resistance presents a challenge to using Loreman's Social Model of Disability Framework and Booths and Ainscow's Index even when they are comprehensively contextualised to the Guyana context so that they can be used more widely to support schools to make a positive difference to the experience of children with SEND.

Further, I examine how children with SEND are subjected to experiences of bullying and teachers' treatment of such children who are perceived as challenging. I also discuss the two different aspects of the resistance to the placement of children with SEND in the schools under study. This is then compared to the teachers' resistance and the circumstances which have led such teachers becoming anxious about their autonomy and capacity as their roles evolve within a changing mainstream environment. I further suggest that this comparison shows that teachers are just as overwhelmed as the children.

## **7.1 The School Yard Complaints**

I witnessed complaints by children without SEND about the placement of other children with SEND in their classes at both schools. These children without SEND seemed to lay claim to the ownership of the schools. These complaints created more barriers in the two schools for the children with SEND. The support the tiers of socialisation highlighted in chapter six. The barriers created from the circumstances showed it is not the fault of the children with SEND but the lack of resources, poor organisation. The barriers also show the prejudice in the socialisation discourses against children with SEND. Some children with SEND were present in the two schools before the government decision to generally place children with SEND in mainstream schools in Guyana. The teachers and children without SEND were just unaware and did not fully understand SEND. The teachers informed me that they felt the placement of children with SEND was a new challenge. The understanding of SEND by teachers, other children and society in general has affected the experiences of children with SEND. Research has shown that society's perception of disability can have a very considerable effect on the lives of disabled people (Dell'Anna, Pellegrini & Ianes, 2019; Levitt, 2017; Oliver, 2008, 2013; Owens, 2015).

The perception of disability by teachers and wider society and the related reluctance to include children with disabilities has had a very considerable effect on the experiences of children with SEND in the two schools because children with SEND are seen as unteachable in some segments of society. These children were considered to have a negative impact on curriculum delivery in mainstream schools (Barnes & Mercer, 2004; Calderón-Almendros, 2018; Haegle & Hodgeb, 2016; Robinson & Goodey, 2018; UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017). Furthermore, such attitudes are more influential than almost anything else in determining the experiences of children with SEND (Robinson & Goodey, 2018). In unit 1.4 of chapter one, I showed how the attitudes of teachers and Guyanese society towards inclusion were shaped historically, and influenced presently, by a dominant culture which has transcended eras. Further, the resistance to the government's discourse on SEND also highlighted how the attitudes and beliefs the teachers are more influential within the school in shaping the experiences of children with SEND.



According to Robinson & Goodey, (2018), negative stereotyping of the excluded individuals by powerful stakeholders is the catalyst in turning the dominant ideology into bullying. The children with SEND are on the receiving end but, so too, in their own way, are the teachers (Barton & Clough, 1995, Barton, 2008; Liasidou, 2012). This is because the government of Guyana's conceptualisation of 'inclusion' requires movement of children from special education to mainstream settings without the requirement that those settings are responsive to an increasingly diverse population, which can be equated to bullying of the mainstream teachers. Further, the Department for Education (2013), Robinson & Goodey (2018) and Robinson (2017) indicate that the portrayal of the inclusive teacher as a *lone practitioner* who can eradicate the entire complex factors that might come into play when barriers to learning are being created or diminished is unfair to teachers. In Guyana, the portrayal of mainstream schools as the ideal place for children with SEND, without providing the necessary support to teachers, has made their beliefs and attitudes more negative towards SEND and increased their resistance to the placement of children with SEND in their classrooms.

Children without identified SEND are bullied and side-lined, which resulted in negative behaviours. They informed me that children with SEND took too much of their teachers' time and attention. They also felt that resources they had thought were in place for them, were no longer readily available because they were diverted to support children with SEND.

**Jason (Child with no identified SEND on the playground):** *These children with SEND are burdens. They have already taken up the teachers' attention and leave us with none. It is also now expected that we provide them with our assistance and time so that they can catch up with the work we have already completed. They are not us and will never be us.*

The above statement is first an attitudinal response against assisting children with SEND and, second, an expression of frustration that children with SEND will never be able to be fully like children without SEND. Perhaps it is also an implication that such children are less human because of it. The sentence, '*These children with SEND are burden*' suggests that the placement of children with SEND only absorb mainstream resources which need to be exclusively available for the children suited for mainstream school. Comparing his fellow students metaphorically to burdens suggest that they are

also parasitic and need to be remove. The suggested removal of unwanted parasites is an attempt to recuperate what Jason framed as losses. Constitutively, children with SEND are seen to be infringing where they do not belong. This also inflames structural discrimination and inequalities because the teachers shared similar sentiments and were not actively correcting the negatively expressed views. Seeing children with SEND as burdens is an embedded historic individual deficit model of disability discourse, which has transcended into the present in some societies (Bracken & Thomas, 2001; Bunbury, 2019; Rees, 2018). This transcended negative legacy also contributed to the belief of children (with and without SEND) and teachers that children with SEND always need excessive amounts of help, resources, teachers' time and attention (Barton, 2009; Bingham et al., 2013; Blustein, 2012; Brittain, 2004; Haegele & Hodgeb, 2016; Smith-Carrier et al., 2017). It is these beliefs that are a part of the teachers' discourses as well as the way the government of Guyana has conceptualised the placement of children with SEND into mainstream schools.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the conceptualisation of SEND by the government partly exacerbated the negative experiences children with SEND like Pam (see Pam's story in chapter five), and their teachers. It may also have led to the child saying, '*They are not us and will never be us.*' It is these beliefs, attitudes, discourses, practices embedded in tradition as well as structural discrimination in the organisation of mainstream schools and lack of support which reinforce the belief that children with SEND do not belong in the two schools. This is supported in the literature as structural discrimination has been found to contribute to a significant proportion of the disability experienced by individuals with impairments (Reynolds & Kiuppis, 2018; Thomas, & Branscombe, 2017).

At Angel Primary School, opposition to the placement of children with SEND was openly expressed by a Grade Six child after an incident during assembly. A child with a physical impairment collapsed suddenly, disrupting an absorbing assembly.

*They are always spoiling everything. I do not know why those deviants do not stay at home. It is clear that they cannot keep up. They are forever ruining things. I hate them. I so hate you guys (children with SEND). I hate you guys for coming to our schools. School is no longer the same. It is like a hospital now or a Mongol house. [Field notes, 2018]*

This openly negative expression from an angry child without SEND appeared to be normalised behaviour because it was directed at the unwanted group of children who were seen as the problem. The constant repetition of '*I so hate you guys*' shows overwhelming negative emotions framed by the children without SEND embedded position in the individual deficit SEND discourse. Referring to children with SEND as spoiling things communicates the same message as Jason when he called them burdens. This could be seen as institutionalised discrimination because it was executed by the children and not challenged by any authority and power in the school. The teachers at Angel Primary evaded correcting or reprimanding the child who had expressed negative marginalising sentiments reflects a bias disciplinary regime. Like their colleagues at Saints Primary School, their inaction framed a regime to support the children's explicit beliefs.

*I watched hoping that a teacher would intervene and speak to the children with and without SEND when there were negative outbursts but I saw none. The children's feelings and views about what had occurred were not considered [Field notes, 2018].*

The anxieties of both groups of children were caused by being ignored. This seems to be a common problem, particularly in the global South, where disabled children and young people's perspectives are ignored, contributing to their marginalisation in mainstream schools (Kamenopoulou, 2018; Naraian, 2013, 2016; Wickenden & Kembhavi-Tam, 2014).

The statement '*I do not know why those deviants do not stay at home*' highlighted another dominant historic practice in Guyana of keeping disabled children at home because they were thought of as unfit for mainstream school and only fit for hospitals or special schools. Children with SEND experience these forms of discrimination and are subjected to violence and abuse, even in their own homes (Chouinard, 2012; Fraser, 2014). Moreover, hating a child because of SEND is constitutive of embedded intuitional discrimination in schools (Barnes, 1992, 2007; Howarth & Andreouli, 2015).

*Mr. Lashley is one of them. He is must have a disability. He supporting them and the problem they cause [Field notes, 2018].*

The child further directed his anger at me because I was framed in the identity of a supporter for children with SEND whose constitutive power contested the child's

institutionalised expectations. As a result of the lack of intervention by staff, I spoke with the affected children at both schools. In relation to the explicit outbursts, teachers asked me for solutions. The head teachers of both schools sought out my views on these occurrences. In both cases, I offered some support but indicated that I could only ascertain the triggers and support of such behaviour after speaking to those propagating and those contesting it.

## **7.2 Saint Primary School Children's complain**

Discourses systematically shape individuals who are complicit in their own oppression (Cisney & Morar, 2015; Foucault, 1972, 1977). Ceon was a child who was not initially identified as a participant for my study. He was one of those children who identified as independent, self-reliant, confident and able to resolve challenges without teachers' or other adults' intervention. He was popular among the other children, and also in the community. After I had spent some time at the school, he started to share his experiences with me. He sought my opinion but never my confirmation or approval of his actions or stance on issues; this he made extremely clear. He invited me to watch his cricket team practice in preparation for an upcoming cricket competition. He also invited me to the actual competition, and I agreed to go. This was when Ceon volunteered to be a part of my research. He made it clear that his participation had to be on his terms. He expressed his power over being implicated or coerced to confirm to expectations in discourses and discursive practices around his school. I agreed to his proposed conditions. During the same week, I had this conversation with Ceon and his cricket friends.

**Ceon:** *Mr Lashley, please come and play cricket with us!*

**L L:** *Good afternoon. Sure, I will play but not for long. I have some urgent work to complete.*

**Ceon:** *Mr Lashley, I know you would say yes. You are not like other teachers because you understand us. You are one of us. You still have time for us.*

**L L:** *What do you mean I am one of you guys?*

**Brama:** *Mr Lashley, it is like this. You listen to us. You do not force things upon us. My big brother was in your class before you went to work at the university.*

*He said that you would always try to understand things from our side first and put us first.*

Two things stood out here; first, the children who knew me before had accepted me contingent upon my previous identity or because one of their older siblings in previous Grade Six classes identified positively with me. Second, I realised that the children had clearly demarcated boundaries between groups of children and teachers. The statement, *Mr Lashley; you are one of us* was a clear indication of my acceptance within their social discourse and that they held the power to determine who was accepted through being associated with them. I wondered how many teachers were admitted into the children's world. The statement also showed that some children were framing me an ally based on a simple gesture of accepting to play sport with them. The act of agreeing to play seemed to make the children feel that I took time to understand their needs. I also discovered that Ceon was the unchallenged leader of his group. There was a boy in the group whom teachers had labelled as having a learning disability because he was continuously failing all standardised assessments, but the group accepted him as one of their own and heavily defended him. Recognising him as a full group member, in this case, was not normalised practice. The boy was Joel.

**L L:** *Ceon, tell me a little about your team of cricketers. What makes each of your players unique and vital to the team?*

**Ceon:** *Mr Lashley my brothers are the best cricketers in the country. We will all make the West Indies cricket team when we are older. Tim is the best bowler. Joey is our keeper; he is the best, and he is brilliant too. He always gets the highest percentage in the test. Joel is our best batsman. The teachers say he cannot learn his book work, but to us, he can learn anything. He is always our top scorer. Besides batting, he can bowl a good spin and he is fast on the fields. He is awesome. I do not care if he cannot count his scores. There are scorers for that, plus we can count it for him. The other boys on the team are loyal to us. They would not play for any other team but mine.*

**L L:** *So, the team is yours? You said the team is mine.*

**Ceon:** (Smiling brightly again) *It is mine. I am the captain. I have always been the captain.*

**L L:** *You call your teammates your brothers and you mentioned loyalty.*

**Ceon:** *Mr Lashley, my boys and I have been friends since kindergarten. Joel and I are neighbours. We walk to school together every day. Do you know many fights Joel fought to defend me?*

**Brama:** *Let us start the game now. Mr Lashley, do you want to open the bowling?*

**Ceon:** *Ok! Ok! We will start practice now. We talk later Mr Lashley. You can walk home with Joel and me.*

Children recognise talents and abilities in each other and celebrate them even when teachers do not acknowledge such talents and abilities. In the two schools, sports and music are not framed as core subjects but rather as enrichment subjects in the curriculum. The mainstream teachers do not place much emphasis on children who are talented in these areas. I shared my experience playing cricket with the boys with a group of teachers who were not interested in the experience. I remembered that I was going to walk home with Ceon and Joel. I heard Ceon shouting to indicate he was ready. We resumed our earlier conversation.

**L L:** *Joel, I thought you were at the parade to honour your father.*

**Joel:** *I was. It was nice because my father got a medal. It lasted for about two hours. Then dad took us for lunch. After dad went back to work and mom and I came home. Mom dropped me off here, so I can walk home with my buddy Ceon.*

**Ceon:** *That is my bro. I know what you will say.*

**Joel:** *What happened in the game today? Did I miss anything?*

**Ceon:** *No bro! We just practised as usual. Oh! Mr Lashley played with us for a while.*

**Joel:** *A teacher played. I thought they are always busy or do not want to get their clothes soiled.*

The children identified with me as a teacher despite being told I was a researcher. Then I was comically mocked for playing cricket with the rogue children without worrying about soiling my clothes. To Ceon's group, my willingness to play cricket without worrying about soiling my clothes seemed to make me a part of their social environment. The social environment, including social relationships, culture and ethos, attitudes and behaviours, has been found to be important in influencing the process of

forming a sense of being included (Vlachou & Papananou, 2015). In identifying me as a teacher, they also framed me as different from the other teachers by this single act, which was remarkable. They seemed to have a clearly defined order in terms of association with teachers, and I was accepted as one of them. I had not made the connection of this to the opposition to placement of children with SEND expressed around the schools.

**L L:** Why do you dislike your teachers?

**Joel:** *Not my teachers. All the teachers in the school I dislike. They have wrong attitudes to anybody who does not get high scores in their stupid tests. My mother says everybody is talented in their way. Our teachers think everybody must be good with book work and if you are not, they think you are stupid.*

**Ceon:** *They cannot help it, bro. They are just teachers.*

**L L:** *Ceon and Joel, do you believe you are more than what you score on the test given by your teachers.*

**Joel:** *I can play cricket like no other child in this school. Cricketers are rich, but our teachers think I am a dunce and I have Special Education Needs, and yet they do not do anything to help me. Do you know I can play three musical instruments and I play the keyboard at church? I am sure none of my teachers can play any musical instruments. I gave the appreciation speech without any mistake at my dad award ceremony.*

**Ceon:** *Tell them, Joel. Mr Lashley, nothing personal is meant by it. Joel just angry and I am too. I know you understand. It is just frustrating all around.*

Research suggests that teachers and children both continually shape and are shaped by the environment (Looney et al., 2017; Sutherland & Oswald, 2005). Joel and Ceon's frustrations suggest the ways in which they were being shaped by the experiences and interactions within the schools. The outcomes of this type of shaping were less than positive. Joel, a child who was labelled to have SEND, was feeling this adverse effect. This kind of effect was normalised in the schools and some researchers (e.g. Conroy et al., 2009; Looney et al., 2017) have found that classroom reinforcement is embedded within reciprocal social transactions, which in turn influenced broader classroom ecologies. Breaking the cycle of traditionality (Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006; McIntyre (2009) is a necessary step towards a more inclusive system and one that may require considerable reform. In the classroom, Joel was categorised a child with SEND

and his teachers' actions towards him were caused by the cycle of negative traditionality.

Joel was an excellent and talented individual outside of the classroom but the teachers did not acknowledge this because it was not a part of the mainstream curriculum, which the Ministry of Education use to evaluate the school and teachers. Being unaware of the evaluation pressures and other demands already on their teachers, the group of boys thought it was an unfair and discriminatory act by the teachers to negatively judge children who fail tests. Teachers' evaluation was also through the children performances on tests. They were horribly rude about it. I also saw both the teachers and boys' behaviour as nested in the tradition which they had become a part of and which needed to be broken. In order to better understand Joel's abilities, I watched a video of a remarkable public speech he had given. He managed to deliver a mature speech before government ministers and high-ranking military officials. Joel's remarkable speech delivery suggests a mismatch between his ability and school demands. Burns, (2011) and Tanaka, (2017) referred to this mismatch as a disturbance and dysfunction between an individual's ability, skills and knowledge, and the environmental demands within a given system.

*The conversation continued*

**L L:** *Boys, tell me how you feel about your school?*

**Joel:** *Some days I do not want to come to this school? All my friends are here, so I come. The teachers are always more helpful to the children they think will always pass their dumb tests.*

**Ceon:** *I only understand some of the things on the tests because my mother and older brother teach me at home. My brother wants me to do well in the tests. So, he helps me a lot.*

**Joel:** *My parents have higher jobs than the teachers, and they do not think I am a dunce. They let me do things within my interest. My mother says I can be anything I want. I want to be a cricketer and a singer. All my teachers want me to do is repeat multiplication tables and learn a set of facts.*

*Joel and Ceon carried on without including me in the conversation for a while.*

**Ceon:** *I am tired some days of doing the same things every day. The teachers always teach the same way.*

**Joel:** *Yes, and we all have to work the same way. Do we not have feelings?*



**Ceon:** *We are robots, bro. We have to work to pass the tests. Please pass your tests, Joel. I am sad when the teachers talk about you with the other teachers.*

**Joel:** *What do they say?*

**Ceon:** *They say your parents are intelligent and you cannot pass the necessary tests. It must disappoint your parents.*

**Joel:** *My parents are proud of me. These teachers are fakes. They are always calling my mom when is fundraising. They always tell my mother that they are trying to help me. They do not do anything different for me.*

The statement ‘*I come to school because my friends are here. Some days I wish I did not have to though.*’ suggests the need for social bonds and relationships among peers. It also indicates that mainstream school is not a place that children with SEND want to attend. Joel and Ceon had evaluated their teachers’ effectiveness in different areas such as care for their learning needs, experiences and relative value in relation to their parents’ job. Joel and Ceon’s evaluation was critical in this sense because of the contrast created. Two children whose identities were reflected differently by their teachers held the same image about their teachers’ identities. The teachers thought Joel was incapable because of his inability to pass the standard assessments. The standard assessments are the key instrument for evaluating him and by extension the teachers. The teachers’ perceptions of Joel also implicated themselves as incapable and not the lone capable practitioners that government discourses portrayed them to be. This perception that they may be failures also makes the teachers anxious and research suggests that teachers’ anxiety can be projected onto children making them anxious about their learning (Gunderson, Ramirez, Beilock, & Levine, 2013). Joel, on the other hand, accorded himself as capable through his public speaking skills and ability to play multiple musical instruments. Joel’s evaluation of himself was also supported by Ceon’s evaluation of him by framing him as the best batsman the school had ever produced.

The identities children have of themselves is important as research has found that children who thought of themselves as capable do better (Balch, 2012; Goe et al., 2008; Neuenschwander et al., 2007; Wilkerson et al., 2000; Wu & Lee, 2017). Joel knew he was capable or at least thought he was, and this seemed not to have a positive effect on his performances outside the mainstream classroom. The school’s calendar is full of demands on teachers’ time. A demanding calendar means that they do not have the time

to learn about Joel's or any other child unique abilities, talents, skills, interests and previous knowledge. These pressures have fuelled two different discourses, which affected the experiences Joel was having at school.

In addition, there was no information provided from the previous institutions (special schools, care centre or previous mainstream school) to the teachers about the children with SEND included in their classes. Moreover, there were no external inputs from SEND specialists on how the experiences for children with SEND could be organised or what reflect suitable experiences. The teachers were left to figure things out on their own. Leaving the teachers unsupported led to the children with SEND being excluded from within the classrooms.

*Returning to the conversation with Joel and Ceon*

**L L:** *Do you think children with Special Education Needs or Disabilities are always slow or struggling children?*

**Joel:** *No. They say I have Special Education Needs. How I can read music and they can't if I am slow and struggling?*

**Ceon:** *Joel, some of the children with Special Needs are dunces buddy, but some are intelligent, and the school makes them appear dumb.*

**Joel:** *Yes, bro! They do not do anything to let these children shine. Later bro! I am at home.*

**Ceon:** *Later Mr Lashley. Talk to you tomorrow. I have to tell my brother I walked home with Mr Lashley.*

**L L:** *Later boys. Please remember to do your homework.*

**Joel and Ceon:** *Do not get like them, Mr Lashley.*

The boys categorised some children with SEND as 'dunces' (Ceon's words) and some as intelligent like Joel but they are all categorised to be less than averagely capable in mainstream schools. They were not given the opportunities or experiences needed to achieve. This conversation further frames the difference in the value of children with and without SEND placed in mainstream schools because they are expected to cope no matter what barriers they face. On one hand, the conversation between Ceon and Joel also show that beyond the tiers of socialisation, the socioeconomic status and class of the parents of the children with SEN/D influence their experiences in school. Joel parents' class, academic power, connection and socioeconomic status also influenced

his self perception and he does not submit to the will of his subjugators. Joel's parents shared similar characteristics to the parents of those children who are resisting subjugation. These children who are exerting resistance are able to do so because their parents are evidently more middle class and powerful. This gives them leverage. It protects them.

On the other hand, the conversation between Joel and Ceon shows that some children with SEND like Latchman, Cassy, Rosemary and others whose parents do not have middle or upper class power, academic power, social connections and wealth have nothing to influence their children's experience and cannot protect them. However, as the conversation highlights with Ceon and Joel, it's a different story. Their parents are important, well-to-do - with connections. They have told their children what SEND is and what it isn't. They have made it clear that being a teacher is nothing spectacular. Further, when an education/schooling system is so hierarchically structured it means that parents have agency and power and children can trade on that as well. Joel and Ceon use the social and cultural power of their parents to take risks, to fight back against injustices. Further, when injustices and barriers are challenging for children with SEN/D who lack social, economical and cultural power or connections, the challenges and barriers are then used by teachers, parents and children without identified SEND to contest their suitability for mainstream school. The conversation with Joel and Ceon raised a number of pertinent points in relation to the experiences of children with SEND. These were:

- Parents' class, academic power, connection and socioeconomic status also influenced children with SEND experiences.
- Children were very perceptive of teachers' actions.
- Children and teachers were overwhelmed and anxious in the schools.
- Children had their philosophies.
- Teachers were unaware of how some children perceive them.
- Children with SEND did not have the experiences they need.
- The negative perceptions of children with SEND that the mainstream teachers held were part of the bigger discourse which maintained the individual deficit understanding of SEND.

Even though children with SEND in the Special Education (SE) classrooms had significantly lower reading and oral language scores than their peers without SEND in mainstream schools, research suggests there were no significant differences in the structural language of general and special educators (Hollo & Wehby, 2017). This provides support for Joel's assertion that the teachers do not personalise learning experiences to help him or other children with SEND. It also supports Ceon's statement that teachers thought all children were similar (see above on his comments concerning "robots") Ceon did not understand that the teachers were bound by the standardised agenda in Guyana. Nevertheless, research suggest that teachers need to personalise learning experiences to benefit all children and increase performance (Hollo & Wehby, 2017; Jarvela, 2006; Jones, 2012; PISA, 2000, 2003, 2006; Thatcher et al., 2008; UNESCO, 2017). Personalising learning experiences is difficult when teachers are monitored to ensure they adhere to the standardised expectations.

Connected to the standardised agenda is Guyana's national school timetable for mainstream primary schools, which is very full. There are an average of seven subjects per day, which have to be covered in a six hour day, which includes a one-hour lunch break and a fifteen minute recess in the morning session and a ten minute recess in the afternoon session in addition to a fifteen minute morning assembly. Therefore, teachers have four hours and fifteen minutes to teach seven subjects. Teachers' adherence to the timetable is also strictly monitored as part of the standardisation process in education. However, findings from the literature suggest that the standardisation of delivery of education limits classroom discussions, discourses, and dialogues which influence students' learning outcomes (O'Donnell, 2017; Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013). This has a particularly negative impact on learning outcomes and achievements of children with SEND. It was also another trigger for the resistance to including children with SEND in mainstream classes where teachers struggle to meet the standardised expectations.

I view the standardised expectations on the teachers in the two schools like Foucault's (1975, 2003, 2006) piercing gaze, observing, scrutinising, moving pitilessly close. Besides being left without support to cater for the children with SEND, the mainstream teachers are likely to feel the pressures of the standardised gaze, which expects a considerable amount from the teachers, but provides limited support, while limiting teachers' autonomy in the classroom. The gaze and limitation mainstream teachers

experience from the standardised expectation is particularly problematic for assessing the academic achievement of children who are not proficient in the standardised expected ways (Genishi & Brainard, 1995; Gutierrez-Clellen, 1996).

Research indicates that standardisation continues to have detrimental effects on school curricula and minority students including children with SEND (David, 2011; Dulfer, Polesel, & Turnbull, 2012; Mathison, 2003; Menken, 2008). In Guyana, this causes frustration for the children. The teachers and the school becomes a place that exercises the other side of power (Foucault, 1975, 2003, 2006; Macqueen et al, 2019; Manokha, 2018), which is Foucault's panoptic dispositifs, the power that the gaze exercises over the teachers. Teachers are fearful of the gaze and are always concerned about their autonomy and actions or the 'pragmatics of the self' (Foucault, 1975, 2003, 2006).

Researchers have also examined ways in which teachers' verbal behaviours (e.g. praise statements, positive and negative feedback, opportunities to respond to instruction) function as reinforcers for student behaviours (O'Donnell, 2017; Partin et al., 2010). This seems to resonate with Joel's claim that teachers only said nice things when they wanted children to participate in activities which make the teachers look good to those with hierarchical power. Children need to have experiences which are adapted and personalised to cater for their diversity (Engelmann & Carnine, 2011; Talley, 2017). Struggling children do not receive direct personalised instructions with the form of communication tailored to their needs because teachers without support. Ceon's group like other children and their parents were unaware of the demands on teachers. I argue that being unaware of the demands on teachers beyond teaching also caused the expressing opposition phenomena.

### 7.3 Ceon's Mishap

Ceon had an incident in school which led to more opposition being expressed by boys in his cricket group. It was not directly his fault, but the discourse he participated in to get power made his behaviour unacceptable and discriminatory. Ceon's team was playing a game of cricket when the ball hit one of the teachers, Miss Ward. The ball left a mark on Miss Ward's shirt and she became upset and shouted directly at Ceon.

**Miss Ward:** *You always have some issue. I knew it had to be you. It would be better for you to practise your schoolwork instead of cricket.*

Miss Ward's sentiment '*You always have some issue*' suggests direct association of negative behaviours with a particular marginalised group of children. When a marginalised group is always associated with negative behaviours, there is likely to be an equal and opposite reaction like Newton's third law of motion. The equal and opposite reaction was the resistances by the boys. Further, when Miss Ward told Ceon that it was his schoolwork needed practicing and not cricket, she re-echoed that some skills and talents are not worth practicing but trumpet weaknesses or limitations are worth highlighting. Miss Ward's action also re-emphasised a discriminatory practice which is historically institutionalised in the school ethos and discursive practices. While expressing her resistance to Ceon's practicing cricket and her perception of the negative outcomes of it, Miss Ward did not realise that Ceon was not there at the time. He had just returned to the playground when the ball hit her. He was blamed even though he was not responsible. Ceon responded by matching Miss Ward's shouts with his own.

**Ceon:** *Lady you are always on my case. You do not know anything as a teacher, and you like to shout at people's children. Make your own.*

Ceon's response was discriminatory and targeted Miss Ward's as a woman because of her childlessness. Both Ceon and Miss Ward were caught in a subjective discourse (Besley, 2015; Harwood & Murray, 2019; Rasiński, 2011; Valikangas. & Seack, 2011; Whitburn, 2016) which they were using to try to obtain power as described by Foucault, (1972, 1975, 1980, 2003, 2006), Manokha (2018) and Walkerdine (1990). This demonstrated their desire to achieve social dominance and power in a situation within an environment where their culturally constructed individual power and positioning in school discourse was challenged in a personally hostile manner. Ceon attacked Miss Ward's teaching skills as she had attacked his learning abilities. Their behaviour codified the two sides (children and teacher) of the regime of truths in discourse to gain or exert power. I argue here that Ceon's expressions and the opposition children were exerting around the school made Miss Ward more upset, it undermined her authority. Miss Ward used her power to stop the game immediately and sent all present to a disciplinary time-out in the library. She also codified and reported a different version of the incident to the head teacher (chief authority of power in the school) because her power was undermined and she needed allied force from a variety of sources to exert her power. In relation to this, power can be seen as omnipresent and can be utilised from multitudinous avenues and is immanent in social relationships

(Foucault, 1980; Selchow, 2017). However, the power exerted by Miss Ward was challenged by an empowered marginalised child.

The other teachers did not listen to the children but became upset like their colleague. They combined forces against the children. It appeared to me that other factors also contributed to the teachers' actions besides the current incident. As argued by various authors (Ajodhia-Andrews, 2007, Cheong, 2018; Lashley, 2017; Mitchell, 2005; Thomas, 1985), there are also compounding factors, which are external to the mainstream education system but present in the society, which influence teachers' and children's perceptions of each other. The head teacher also believed that other compounding factors led Ceon's behaviours. She was convinced that he would be likely to be on his best behaviour because the cricket competition was approaching.

**Mrs. Lew (Saints Primary School head teacher):** *I do not believe Ceon deliberately misbehaved at this point. He anticipated winning the upcoming cricket competition. I know this because I always spare a few minutes to watch them practice from my office window at recess and after school. I do not want to punish Ceon the way the teachers are expecting.*

Mrs. Lew, the most powerful teacher in the school, did not want to deploy her power to support her teachers. This puzzled me because, according to various authors, power influence creates a collective desire (Chapman and Adams, 2002; Foucault, 1977; Mallon, 2017; Selchow, 2017; Wolfensberger, 1972). On the contrary, she allied her power to the child expressing opposition. Probably her allegiance was with their parents' class, academic power, connection and socioeconomic status. I spoke to the boys as part of the investigation.

**L L:** *Tell me what happened on the playground during the mid-morning recess.*

**Ceon, Henry and Joel:** *Thank God it is Mr Lashley.*

**Ceon:** *I thought we would be dead for sure with any other teacher. How come they sent you?*

The boys' discourse shows that they thought power was going to be exerted to prosecute them, but they seemed to accept that I would not use power to prosecute or coerce them into accepting that they were wrong. The librarian had positioned herself strategically to be a part of the session. She also used her authority in the library to support the boys.

**Henry:** *Mr Lashley, I am the one who was batting. I did not intentionally hit it at the teacher. She just walked into the path.*

**L L:** *Did you try telling the teacher that Henry?*

**Henry:** *She did not give us a chance to speak. She saw Ceon who was coming back to play and attacked him.*

The boys' power to defend each other was contested and obstructed by teachers' biases. I observed the obstruction when Henry attempted to take responsibility by confessing to his role in the incident. He was ignored while Ceon was targeted by the teachers. Ignoring the confession could be seen as a kind of reaffirmation of the power a child without an identified SEND has that allows selected behaviours of such children to be overlooked. The teachers seemed to be unconsciously using their power to show that success at standardised assessments gave children like Henry the power to escape some consequences while those failing standardised assessment did not have the power to avoid the consequences of the same behaviour.

**L L:** *Did anyone try talking to the teacher?*

**Jaf:** *Yes, but she told us to be quiet if we knew what is good for us.*

**Henry:** *She has it in for Ceon. I am sure if she had realised it was me, automatically it would have been an accident. Maybe she would have accepted an apology or told me to be more careful. It is Ceon she saw first. So, he must be guilty in her head.*

**Jaf:** *This is so unfair. They will want to take Ceon off the team.*

The boys' thinking was aligned with that of Mrs. Lew. The dynamics of power seem to have been disrupted by such an alignment. The boys' attempts to obtain power were supported by the most powerful teacher in the school. They feared the consequences Ceon would face. He was already told by the other teachers to stay silent if they did not want further trouble with them. This was the teachers' way of indicating that they still had the power to administer punishment for the boys' attempt to obtain more power than was apportioned to them.

**L L:** *Ceon, how do you feel about all this?*

**Ceon:** *I did not do anything wrong. They crucified Jesus. This school is my crucifier. Let them do what they want. Tables do turn. They will come to me needing something when I grow up.*



I argue that it is a form of exclusion when a child without an identified SEND considers the school he attends as his crucifier (see chapter six). Ceon appeared to have surrendered himself to be crucified at school for the present incident. While Ceon appeared to have lowered his resistance, he indicated that he will be waiting for his turn to crucify the teachers, when he is older and has more power. This further illustrates the beginning of a cycle, which would likely continue unless the power relationship changed in school. I spoke to Miss Ward later and, in a calmer state, she confirmed she did not see Ceon hit the ball. She confirmed seeing Ceon immediately after being hit by the ball and noted that he was always identified as an instigator of trouble. Therefore, she concluded that if he was not directly responsible, he had probably instigated it. This is a normalised situation, as research suggests that children in mainstream schools can be disciplined for defiance even when they respectfully challenge teachers' inappropriate behaviours (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009; Selchow, 2017).

Sharing power could remove teachers' feelings of being defied when they are respectfully challenged by students. Sharing power is particularly vital when working with youth who are subordinated in multiple realms of their lives (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009; Selchow, 2017). If teachers share power with children in relational understandings of power, there would be fewer occurrences of adverse experiences for children. It could enable children to develop confidence in their teachers' perception of them as valuable children, whether or not such children had a SEND. In relation to this, research has found that a positive teacher-student relationship in a mainstream school contribute better experiences for all children (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009; Skiba & Williams, 2014; Selchow, 2017; Vavrus & Cole, 2002).

Moreover, teachers often react to an incident or act of indiscipline rather than understanding the cause (Rogers, 2012, 2017; Sturgess, 2011; Vaaland, 2017). Ceon only reacted in an inappropriate manner to the young teacher because they both wanted to obtain power in an emotionally evocative situation where Ceon was being implicated as the instigator or culprit. However, an understanding of the reasons for and the nature of the conflicts is necessary for appropriate conflict management and resolution (Atıcı, 2007; Rogers, 2012, 2017; Sturgess, 2011; Türnüklü, 2004; Vaaland, 2017). Miss Ward could have tried to understand what really caused the ball to hit her. This understanding could have led to a better experience which would have been less traumatic for both the teacher and the children.

Overall, there needs to be an atmosphere that facilitates dialogue among all the school stakeholders despite power differences in the school. Through such dialogue, children may express their feelings about experiences in school even when those experiences are unpleasant (Skilbeck, 2017; Thornbury, 2010). Therefore, such dialogue, and the right atmosphere, need to be the norm to make the classroom and school a child-friendly environment for all. Moreover, research suggests that the most effective way to handle disrespect is to be a role model for respect (Goss et al., 2017; Vernon, 2009). In her quest to obtain power in the presence of all the children on the playground, Miss Ward appeared inconsiderate and disrespectful. The ripple effect of this was that the children concerned thought that some teachers were inherently disrespectful to children and expressed their opposition to such attempts to obtain power.

### ***7.3.1 The outcome of the investigation***

The Mrs. Lew was relieved to find out Ceon was not responsible for the ball hitting the teacher.

**Mrs Lew (head teacher):** *I always find Ceon to be a polite and responsible young man. His recent outbursts made me think that the trigger(s) were in the school.*

Teachers' attitudes affect children's personality (Goss et al., 2017; Skilbeck, 2017; Uluga et al., 2011). Mrs. Lew was bemused by Ceon's outburst. She acknowledged that in some instances the school appeared unfair to powerless groups of children. She thought something in addition to the competing SEND discourses may have forged Ceon's new identity and triggered the recent increases in expressed oppositions. The incident between Ceon and the teacher suggests that even though Ceon is not considered to have an identified SEND, the struggle to obtain power between him and the teachers influenced the teachers' attitudes in the situation.

Research suggests that positive attitudes lead to success while negative attitudes lead to failure and, as a result, success can lead to positive ego attitudes while failure leads to negative ego attitudes (Gecer, 2002; Goss et al., 2017; Gundogdu & Silman, 2007). Therefore, if teachers engage in belittling behaviour towards children through their failures or for having a SEND, the adverse effects of this can be an emergent culture of

using complaints and opposition to obtain power as was seen in the two schools under study.

Considering social learning and achievement theory, the basic responsibility of teaching is to support all children in the classroom and its surroundings. Teachers need to have positive expectations to motivate all children to learn through providing the necessary enabling experiences. However, the fulfilment of this responsibility is only possible where teachers are able to develop healthy personality values themselves (Ames, 1990, 1992; Can, 2011; Inelmen, 2011; Vygotsky, 1962, 1993; Yavuzer, 2000). If teachers can exert more positive attitudes toward all the students in their classes, the children are likely to have more positive experiences in the two schools.

## **7.4 Angel Primary School Children's Resistance**

Thomas was in the 'B' class of Grade Six (see mini bio in chapter three, Table 3.2). His experience was fuelled by the discourse in mainstream school, society and his home framing the idea that children without SEND are the ideal students for mainstream school while children with SEND are seen as not suitable. Children with a known SEND were also told in his presence that they were unsuitable for mainstream schools. Different yet conflicting behaviours were expected from Thomas by his mother (Mrs. Thomas), teachers, peers without an identified SEND as well as himself. He was a conflicted and an overwhelmed child without an identified SEND who was involved in a challenging situation which subordinated him as powerless. He was unsure how to respond to the challenges caused by his subordinated powerless state since he was accustomed to dominance. Structural, societal and institutional inequalities in his sphere of socialisation also framed his experiences and feelings towards children with SEND, which resulted in his SEND phobia.

Thomas' SEND phobia evolved into SEND persecution as a result of the common understanding of SEND in his environment which promoted the idea that mainstream school placement was not a right for children with SEND. The culture he was embedded in was inflexible and insensitive to children with SEND (see chapter one). Research suggests that schools need to focus on the environment and teachers' practices, rather than on what an individual child can or cannot do (Aydın, 2016, as cited in Sezer & Can, 2018; Maciver et al. 2018) to facilitate learning for all children.

However, Mrs Thomas (a school governor), teachers and peers focused on the impairments and possible limitations of children with SEND instead of focusing on school and society's practices, which could make school a more enabling environment for such children.

Findings from research suggest that one of the most common disorders in children is generalised anxiety disorder (Keles, McCrae & Grealish, 2019; Mental Health Foundation 2018; Stansfeld et al, 2016). Thomas started to exhibit signs of anxiety disorder, which became gradually worse. He was formally a celebrated and confident child, but seemed to have become anxious because he was no longer sure of how to act in mainstream school. This was a difficult experience for him. I watched his anxiety gradually increase especially when he was aware that his mother, Mrs Thomas, was at school. She expected him not to socialise with children SEND who to her were denying him his elite status in school. Thomas' anxiety overwhelmed him with negative emotions and thoughts about children with SEND. Thomas expressed openly after the incident during an assembly where a child with a physical impairment collapsed and disrupted an absorbing assembly, which was discussed earlier in the chapter. The following is an excerpt from my discussions with Thomas:

**L L:** *Hi Thomas, may I talk to you a little?*

**Thomas:** *Sure Mr Lashley, I know what you will say. You love them. You are always defending them. You must be one of them.*

**L L:** *Thomas, what caused you to get so upset this morning? Your comments were extremely hurtful.*

**Thomas:** *You do not understand Mr Lashley. You say you know, but you do not. I know you do not because you are a teacher. You are supposed to say those things. When am I going to be punished?*

Thomas was overly anxious and clearly conflicted. He felt he would not be understood and it was evident in his utterance, '*You do not understand Mr Lashley. You say you know, but you do not.*' Thomas seemed to draw a line of separation between us (me and children with SEND) and them (him and all others without SEND). He indicated this separation by negatively framing our conversation before it occurred because he felt my allegiance was with the children with SEND. He may have thought I was merely being kind to him after his outburst because I wanted him to be kinder to

children with SEND. He then reconstituted me as a teacher and appeared to want me to punish him for the outburst so he would feel validated. He may have believed that his self-validation would perhaps balance his actions with the punishment and put an end to the incident. Thomas' discourse reflects (Foucault, 1977, 1980) discussion on an individual's failure to self discipline. He acted out against the expectations of multiple power gazes (mother, teachers and society). It was probably the varying expectations of the multiple gazes which made Thomas' confused, anxious and fearful and was the cause of Thomas' negative attitude and behaviour.

Nevertheless, he has highlighted an important aspect of this research, which is that no matter how much I study the experiences of the children, I cannot truly live the experience. This is because of my subjective position researching a phenomenon that I was a part of before becoming aware of its implication for exclusion of children with SEND. He was also pointing out that, because I am not a child no matter how much I participate in their experiences, I would neither truly understand it nor his feelings. I agree with Thomas that I was in a subjective position as is reflected in my theoretical framework and approach to data analysis (see chapter two and four). This is so because subjectivity is dependent on discourse (González Rey, 2018; Laclau 1995 as cited in Rasiński, 2011) and discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1972; González Rey, 2018; Harwood & Murray, 2019; Laclau 1995 as cited in Rasiński, 2011; Parkes et al., 2010). Therefore, while, as Thomas stated, I could not truly live experiences such as his anxiety and conflicted emotions, I was (and am) a part of the discourse by researching it.

**L L:** *Thomas I may understand things better if you explain your feelings to me.*

**Thomas:** *I do not know why those children did not stay at the schools for Mongols.*

**L L:** *I am sure you meant special schools right Thomas.*

**Thomas:** *Whatever it is, I do not want them here.*

**L L:** *Tell me how the presence of children with SEND affected you personally.*

**Thomas:** *I waited an entire term for this assembly. I enjoy musical assemblies. I love music. I love it when the teachers take part in the assembly. It is the one time you get to do something with your teachers besides school work. The*

*Mongol had to go and collapse. All the teachers ran to his assistance, and that ended the assembly. I may be the only one who let my feelings out, but I know almost all the children were disappointed. They do not want to say anything.*

**L L:** *So, Thomas, if you had gotten ill during the assembly and collapsed, how would you have felt if someone had reacted the way you did?*

**Thomas:** *I meant it is different! If I had gotten sick that would have been normal.*

Culture continues to matter in the experiences of all children, but it is frequently misunderstood or ignored (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2018). Thomas' statements suggest that when a child is embedded in a culture at school sees that children with impairments as abnormal, it is easy for him to believe that if such a child gets ill in mainstream school, it is not normal but tragic. This also highlights how power plays out in these institutionalised forms (Foucault, 1975, 1977). This institutionalised form of power also reflects the institutional discrimination children with SEND experience from peers like Thomas without SEND. Thomas' power was also contingent upon his belief that he is normal and has the right to mobilise what he sees as a struggle against inclusion of the abnormal children with SEND. Thus, according to Foucault (1975) power diffuses in the very forms of normality. The government of Guyana has imposed a new form of normality which includes children with SEND being educated with their peers without SEND in mainstream schools. This newly imposed form of normality is misleading, romanticised and does not prepare either children like Thomas or their teachers for the new power relations resulting from the new form of perceived normality. According to Anastasiou et al (2018), this is a worrying situation because misleading, inclusion-focused, intemperately romanticised rhetoric regarding the education of children with disabilities in many nations is problematic. Thomas also reflected the discourse that is still dominant in Guyanese culture and which continues impacts on the experiences of children with SEND.

Further, Thomas was discriminating without being conscious of it because he was deeply embedded in a discourse that anyone ever fully understands. As a result, he was acting according to the expectations of the dominant power influences in his life and exhibiting behaviours learnt informally in school through his teachers' and Mrs. Thomas.

**L L:** *Do you think that it is normal for a child with SEND to get ill too?*

**Thomas:** *He did not get ill. He was weak and collapsed. They are always weak. These children with their disabilities are not able to cope with our school. Why are they forced to be here? They do not even want to be here. They get on my nerves, and I am always anxious around them. I may hurt them by just touching them. They even seem anxious and nervous here too. This is not good for any of us.*

**L L:** *I understand how you feel now that you are explaining it to me, Thomas. Is there anything else you want to tell me? How about what made you anxious this morning?*

**Thomas:** *I waited very long for this assembly. I missed the last one because I had to go to a quiz competition for the school. I heard it was terrific. I was anxiously awaiting this assembly. Why did they have to spoil it, Mr Lashley? Is there anything at this school which is still only ours?*

**L L:** *Ours?*

**Thomas:** *Children who were here before them.*

According to Kinniburgh, Blaustein & Spinazzola, (2005) and Young, Sandman & Craske (2019) when a child is exposed to an environment marked by multiple stressors, frequently within a care giving system that is intended to be the child's primary source of safety and stability, s/he can develop overwhelming anxiety. Thomas was placed in emotionally evocative situations in school caused by the reaction of his mother and teachers to the placement in school of children with SEND. He was overwhelmed and experiencing complicated emotions and his outburst was probably a reaction brought on by anxiety. These feelings were too much for this young child. Further, his beliefs that the placement of children with SEND was good for neither them nor children without SEND were also emotionally overwhelming.

Thomas also indicated that he thought disabled children were fragile and not resilient enough for mainstream school because that was what he had heard in the discourses around his school. It is the discourses that influence Thomas' perception of children with SEND as untouchables. Thomas echoed his belief in the fragility and untouchable nature of children with SEND when stated, '*They are always weak*' and '*I may hurt*

*them by just touching them*'. He also thought that their presence had negatively changed mainstream school and children without SEND had lost the power, autonomy and privilege they had in school because his mother had presented this perspective to him. All these thoughts made Thomas constantly anxious and angry. Managing his anger while being anxious and in emotionally evocative situations was challenging for him. Indeed, this is supported by research that indicates that the management of anger can generally be very challenging (Findler & Engel, 2011; Rogers, 2017). As a result, Thomas acted out his anger and the target of Thomas' anger was the children with SEND. Thomas also stated that he might be the child who is expressing his anger, but many other children had internalised their rage.

Thomas' anger was also likely to have had a negative effect on the children with SEND. Several children with SEND like Amanda, Boyo, Sabrina described and exhibited feelings of inferiority, self-consciousness, shyness, hypersensitivity, reclusiveness, timidity, and passive-aggressive behaviour after Thomas' outburst. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that the anger expressed or internalised by children without SEND and the overwhelming emotions felt by children with SEND caused both groups of children to feel anxious. It also constituted more emotionally evocative situations for both groups of children and teachers, framed conflicting emotions and such conflicting emotions, could lead to alienation, anxiety and withdrawal (Findler & Engel, 2011; Rogers, 2017). However, research on connectedness in schools has indicated that connectedness could be a protective factor, reducing anger and increasing behaviour control in school-aged children experiencing conflicting emotions (Rice, et al., 2008; Turki et al., 2017). Therefore, building relationships and connections in schools could help to reduce anger and aggression.

High levels of anxiety are also problematic as children with high anxiety can fall behind academically because they are distracted or overwhelmed by their emotions (Hopko et al., 2005; Taylor et al., 2017; Werner-Seidler et al., 2017). Thomas was a brilliant child who was consumed with anger towards children with SEND. This had distracted him and was negatively impacting on his academic performance. He had to exert more effort to perform in subjects such as like Mathematics in which he had previously excelled. This could be a particular problem in a school setting because if the causes of the anxiety are not addressed and they are left untreated, anxiety can persist for years (Mychailyszyn, et al., 2010; Owens, et al., 2008; Ozsivadjian, et al.,



2012; Taylor, et al., 2017; Werner-Seidler, et al., 2017). This could make both groups of children more vulnerable as they advance in education and life. Also, the children with SEND in Thomas' class further limited their participation in social activities after the outbursts. Almost a year after I left Thomas's school, local newspapers reported on the school in relation to for children being violent to each other; teachers slamming doors in parents' faces and the school's administration responding poorly.

Teachers can facilitate successful social interaction among children who are feeling anxious (Minahan & Rappaport, 2012; Taylor et al., 2017; Werner-Seidler et al., 2017). Increased successful interaction can reduce feelings of anxiety and develop acceptance. This can be facilitated in two ways. First, a child with SEND can be placed in small groups with children without SEND to complete collaborative tasks. Second, children like Thomas could be placed with children with SEND who are talented and confident to work and interact on a typical project guided by the teacher. This could help them to realise that children with SEND go through the same challenges and emotions as children without a known SEND. Additionally, they could understand that their fears may also be shared by other children who have SEND.

From a sociological perspective, according to Pirskanen, et al, (2019) children can be stressed, worried or anxious during transitions. Children already in mainstream schools were not made aware of how the placement of children with SEND in their schools would impact the learning interactions and experiences and this is likely to have made them anxious. Similarly, children with SEND were not prepared for the transition into mainstream schools and they also became anxious. A proper transition plan was not prepared or provided either at Saints or Angel Primary School, where all the stakeholders could be properly informed and the both groups could have been integrated without emphasising the needs of some children over others. As a result, the lack of a plan created anxiety among children as well as teachers (Taylor, et al., 2017; Wedell, 2005; Werner-Seidler, et al., 2017).

In addition, the teachers indicated that they were feeling anxious due to their fears of not being able to cope with the increased demands and workload. Earlier studies on workloads at primary and secondary levels have indicated that teachers feel anxious in changing situations in primary and secondary education which increase the work demands on teachers (Galton & MacBeath, 2002; MacBeath & Galton, 2004;

Makhwathana et al., 2017). These studies indicate that the pressures on SENCOs and support staff had increased tremendously. It is challenging to cope with children with SEND against a background of deterioration in classroom behaviour and an increase in anti-school, anti-learning attitudes among children in general. The teachers faced all these pressures alone. As noted earlier in this study, they were expected to facilitate the placement of children with SEND with limited resources. The classrooms become more emotionally evocative and the teachers felt more anxious with the placement of children with SEND in their classes which were already challenging environments.

### **7.5 Thomas becoming the bully**

After Thomas' outburst it appeared as though he had refocused his attention on his schoolwork. However, Thomas' SEND phobia and SEND persecution further evolved into explicit bullying of children with SEND. Thomas who was overwhelmed, anxious and fearful that he would hurt children with SEND if he touched them was bullying them. On one occasion, I noticed some movements at the back of the canteen, which appeared unusual, and I investigated them. I found Thomas was bullying Tom. Tom lived with his single parent father because his mother had abandoned them to start a new family. Tom, who had a learning disability, felt neglected and often isolated himself. He was also caught up in the emotionally evocative discourses and discursive practices about SEND. Thomas had taken advantage of Tom's isolation. Thomas told Tom that if he ever reported him, he would deal with Tom severely when he met Tom alone.

I made my presence known, and Thomas ran off. I took Tom to Mrs. Faith and documented the incident. Consequently, Thomas was called to the Mrs. Faith's office, where he met Mrs. Thomas and me. He started crying and apologising framing how his actions are implications of the placement of children with SEND. Once again, I saw Thomas consumed by anxiety. The school had stringent policies against bullying. Mrs. Thomas was on the PTA and was a member of board of governors. She was instrumental in the review of the bullying policies in September 2017. She was also against the placement of children with SEND in the school. The disappointment I observed her expressed was not because her son had done something wrong. She stated in Thomas' presence that it was the conditions contingent upon the placement of

children with SEND are responsible for his action. We collectively agreed that I would talk to both boys and Thomas would be put in detention where he would help the younger children in the remedial classes. Tom's father was also informed of the incident and decision, as he was unable to be present at school.

The following is an extract from the first conversation with Tom after the incident.

**L L:** *Do you always have your lunch alone?*

**Tom:** *Yeah! No one wants to be my friend. I eat there by myself.*

**L L:** *So today was not the first time Thomas bullied you?*

**Tom:** *No. He has been taking advantage of me, since after the assembly thing.*

*It is like he is blaming me! I am not the one who spoiled the assembly.*

**L L:** *You are correct Tom. It is not your fault. Neither is it the fault of the child who collapsed nor Thomas' fault.*

Tom feelings of loneliness and being ostracised were embedded in the discourses he heard, which promoted the idea of his unsuitability to be included at school. Tom's feelings are also a reflection of the untouchable nature of children with SEND. On one hand, Tom feels Thomas blames him for the assembly experience, his reactions and subsequent consequences. Tom experiences discrimination perpetuated by Thomas. He echoed his feelings of discrimination '*I am not the one who spoiled the assembly*' Thus, indicating his innocence and wrongful punishment. On the other hand, Thomas took out his frustration and apathy on all children with SEND because he blamed them for disrupting the status quo at his school. This further illustrates the tiers of socialisation within mainstream schools and the perceived superiority of children without SEND (see chapter six).

**Tom:** *It is Thomas' fault, Mr Lashley. He has been beating up children all around the school. Everyone is afraid of him so that no one would report him. We are not important like Thomas and his mother.*

**L L:** *You are unique Tom and very important. You are important to me. You are relevant to your mom and dad.*

**Tom:** *I am not important, or my parents would have stayed with me.*

Tom felt he deserved to be bullied because as a child with impairment he is categorised as unimportant. He internalised that it is what he is allowed. Bullying was widespread in Guyana before the government took the decision to generally include children with SEND in mainstream schools. The persecution has inflicted psychological as well as physical pain on children with SEND. It has also damaged their self-esteem, thus, making them more vulnerable to depersonalisation and feelings of valuelessness (see chapter six).

**L L:** *Life is not always fair Tom, but that does not mean you are not very important to everyone. Why did you allow Thomas to bully you? I know you represented yourself well in the past or sought help from an adult.*

**Tom:** *I am not as important as him in this school. He is always winning competitions for the school, and he is rich. He is older than I am plus everyone would believe him over me.*

**L L:** *Tom, the way Thomas treated you, how did that make you feel?*

**Tom:** *I am sad. It is like everyone does not like me. The children in my class do not love me.*

**L L:** *Tom, it may appear that individuals do not like you, but they do. Some persons cannot express their feelings very well.*

**Tom:** *I do not like being by myself. It just hurts more, but no one ever asked me why I am always by myself.*

**L L:** *I understand; you need a friend. I can be your friend until you make a friend among your peers.*

It is very important to note that Tom points out that he recognises the variation of position between himself and Thomas. Tom highlights this recognition when he stated that he is not as important as Thomas in the school because Thomas is always winning competitions for the school. And, that Thomas is rich with influence which makes his words more believable than Tom's expressions. In Tom's expression, he is noting that Thomas has institutional power, money and academic prowess - it means that Tom will not be believed in himself or that he is right. It also indicates that Tom will accept the lesser subjugated position without resistance.

Feelings of unimportance along with loneliness and unhappiness about his status overwhelmed Tom. He is also saddened because he feels no one cares about his feelings. Tom's expression, *'It just hurts more, but no one ever asked me why I am always by myself'* further suggest his feelings of being valueless at school. Learning disabled students, by definition, have poorer school functioning, which is one characteristic of bully/victims (Haynie et al., 2001; Kaukianinen et al., 2002; UNESCO, 2017). Tom had lost all feeling of significance in mainstream school and he appeared highly depressed. He continued to express that being abandoned, neglected and bullied was his fault because he had a SEND and lived in poverty. He was made doubly vulnerable by the open opposition against children with SEND and tenseness in the environment. Tom wished he had a friend in the school which also seemed to indicate he wished he had power or someone with power to aid him. He did not have one, and as a result, he felt powerless. He explained to me that it made him scared especially when he could not do the given learning tasks. Tom left for home, and I met with Thomas in detention, where he began to apologise confusingly again to mobilise his recuperation.

**Thomas:** *Mr Lashley, I am so very sorry for all the bullying I have done. I did not realise I had become such a rotten bully. It just started as a simple way to get back at them (children with SEND) for always ruining everything, since they got to our school.*

**L L:** *Are there any good bullies Thomas?*

**Thomas:** *No Mr Lashley! Bullying is horrible. I was hurting myself too. My mom said I was not only damaging my character and personality, but also the personalities and self-esteem of the children I bullied.*

**L L:** *What do you think Thomas? Do not tell me what your mom thinks or has told you to believe.*

**Thomas:** *I know what I did was wrong. I know I hurt Tom and all the other children with a disability. I know I feel bad about it.*

**L L:** *Well Thomas, I am pleased you have learnt all this. How will it help you to change your behaviour towards children with SEND like Tom and the other victims of your bullying rampage?*

**Thomas:** *I will start making things right. I will be asking them to have lunch with my friends and me.*

**L L:** *Commendable Thomas.*

**Thomas:** *I was once a good boy I must return to that boy.*

Despite the discussions on the negatives of bullying and the damage his actions had done, Thomas was more concerned about himself and what his mother thought rather than about the children he had bullied. His responses sound rehearsed. He was more concerned about being perceived by his mother as associating with children who have SEND because that would disappoint her. Mrs. Thomas' reaction, discussed in previous paragraphs, also indicated that she felt the same. She blamed the placement of children with SEND for creating the conditions which give rise to the bullying. I argue that he made the promises to be better because he wanted to please his mother. He wanted to restore his image in her eyes and not because he genuinely cared. Being considerate of the needs of children with SEND was the least of Thomas' and his mother concerns. Thomas and his mother's reactions are a reflection of the practices expected from the discourses on SEND in parts of society.

**L L:** *Whenever you looked at this boy you abused on a daily basis, how did that make you feel?*

**Thomas:** *I felt powerful. I felt good. I felt superior. I felt like I was regaining control of the school for the regular children who were here before the disabled children came.*

**L L:** *Would you miss that feeling of power and superiority?*

**Thomas:** *I do not know Mr Lashley.*

**L L:** *What about if something makes you angry again and it was the fault of a child with SEND?*

**Thomas:** *I will get angry again, but I will try to express it sensibly and also consider other persons' feelings especially children with disabilities.*

**L L:** *That is an excellent idea, Thomas.*

**Thomas:** *I will come and talk to you if I am upset and I feel like I am losing control.*

The placements of children in the school and the apprehensive reactions created the situation which made Thomas attempted to demonstrate superiority through bullying. Thomas response to my question about missing the perceived power associated with being bully indicated that he was almost addicted. Research findings suggested that vulnerability to bullying cuts across all types of disability (Abdulsalam, et al., 2017; Estelle et al., 2009; Luciano & Savage, 2007; Martlew & Hodson, 1991; Mencap, 2007) See further association of vulnerability to bullying cutting across all types of disability in research by Mishna (2003), Nabuzoka and Smith, (1993) Smith and Tippet (2007), Thompson et al., (1994), Twyman et al., (2010) and UNESCO, (2017). Thomas wanted to exert power over the children with SEND who he felt had disrupted the autonomy of mainstream school for children without SEND. He seemed to feel that bullying was the way to get children with SEND removed from the school. Both boys were affected emotionally by this experience despite one being the perpetrator and the other victim. This contributed to changes in their personality, self-concept and attitudes. Several researchers (see Abdulsalam et al., 2017; Fox & Boulton, 2005) have found that victims of bullying often lack a variety of social skills. I argue that the new dynamics in school made socialisation challenging for both Thomas and Tom because they were not sufficiently prepared for such changes. The social anxieties this created are likely to have led to Tom isolated himself socially and Thomas to begin bullying. In sum, all the children with SEND at the participating schools were vulnerable to being bullied.

Peer victimisation leads to withdrawal, anxiety, depressive symptoms, social problems, thought problems, attention problems and disruptive behaviour and these symptoms are themselves characteristics that are likely to render young people more likely to be victims of further bullying (Abdulsalam et al., 2017; Baumeister et al., 2008; Kuhne & Wiener, 2000; McLaughlin, et al., 2010; Savage, 2005; Storch et al., 2003; Taylor, 2012;). All Thomas' known victims including Tom were withdrawn. They were anxious and had attention problems or disruptive behaviours all of which can be traced back to the starting point of being bullied. Being bullied led to their exclusion because they were bullied for having impairment.

## 7.6 Final Thoughts

In this chapter, I have argued that children were subjected to exclusion beyond the stay in your lane discourse and the discipline and surveillance that went with it. I have shown how children with SEND are excluded within these schools, while supposedly being included. In addition, I have argued throughout this chapter, that this situation is produced by the competing discourses in the field of inclusive education in Guyana. On the one hand, there is the Government's decision that children with SEND need to be taught in mainstream schools while, on the other hand, there are discourses of resistance used by children both with and without SEND and other discourses of unsuitability and unreasonableness from teachers and parents.

I have also presented the complaints and resistance of children with an emphasis on the experiences of Ceon and Thomas. The resistance highlighted in this chapter showed a challenge to using Loreman's Framework and Booths and Ainscow's Index even when they are comprehensively contextualised to facilitate use more widely across Guyana, in order to support schools to make a positive difference to the experience of children with SEND. Furthermore, I have examined experiences of bullying experienced by children with SEND and teachers' treatment of children who are perceived as challenging. I also tried to show the two sides of the resistance to the placement of children with SEND in the research schools. To this end, I have highlighted the marginalised children's resistance which was supported by a child without SEND. This was then compared to the teachers' resistance and the circumstances which made them anxious about their autonomy and capacity as their roles evolved within a changing mainstream environment. The comparison reflected that teachers are just as overwhelmed as the children.



## Chapter Eight: Southern Inclusive Framework

*All I am seeing is cultural and traditional challenges whether the framework is unique to Guyana or not. As many of the other teachers stated in the discussion, changes in these rural communities will be resisted. The adoption of anything in these parts will be challenged. Getting the community to accept that the medical model is not benefiting our children with disabilities in mainstream schools will be the start. Hopefully, with this acceptance, the community may accept a social model framework of disability.*

Mrs. Archer (Teacher) – Focus Group Discussions, 2018

### 8.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the resistance and opposition expressed by children with and without SEND who have been labelled as challenging, who were marginalised and also faced institutional discrimination and inequalities. I also highlighted the development of bullying at the two schools as well as showing how the children who were perceived as challenging were treated in mainstream schools. In summary, the two sides (children's and teachers') of the resistance were presented to show the exercise of power in the relational dynamics in the two schools.

As stated in chapter two, part of my theoretical approach to disability stems from the social model of disability, which are articulated in two frameworks, namely Loreman's (2009) Social Framework/Evaluative Tool and Booth and Ainscow's (2002, 2011) *Index*. My third research question (chapter one) sought to gather data to understand how these two school-based social model frameworks could be adapted contextually for use more widely across Guyana to support schools to make a more positive difference to the experience of children with SEND. The data suggest that it is possible to adopt both school-based social model frameworks, but it will be challenging to fully contextualise both frameworks in the two schools studied, and across Guyana more widely.

In this chapter, I highlight areas where potential challenges and opportunities for adapting the two frameworks exist in the schools under study. I particularly examine areas where these possibilities exist for adapting the two frameworks by looking at each point of the Loreman's Framework and the Index individually. Following this, I present

an adapted framework specifically tailored for schools in Guyana. As seen in the comments of Mrs. Archer (teacher) above, there is a need for cultural and traditional change even if an inclusive framework is designed or contextualised. To support such a change, I also present a support tool, The Southern Inclusive Checker, for the Southern Inclusive Framework which I introduce in this chapter to enable the teachers show more support for inclusivity in the two schools.

## **8.1 Social Model of Disability Frameworks**

### ***8.1.1 Analysis of Loreman's Social Model of Disability Framework/ Evaluative Tool***

The first feature of the framework posited by Loreman, (2009) states:

***All children attend their neighbourhood school. Schools and districts have a 'zero-rejection' policy when it comes to registering and teaching children in their region.***

There are policies in Guyana like the 'No Child Left behind Initiative', 'Operation Care' and others which support the zero-rejection policy posited in Loreman's (2009) Framework. However, enrolling children with SEND in the schools did not ensure that they received the experiences, socialisation and opportunities needed in mainstream education (see chapter five thru seven). I observed this with Akon, Joseph and Junior Bob and this was also emphasised in chapter six: *Stay in your lane* and further emphasised in chapter seven: *Expressing Opposition*. There are many other culturally specific factors in Guyana which hinder children from socialising and receiving a full education. These challenge contextualising Loreman's Framework's first feature.

Many children with SEND are living in an impoverished state and face the possibility of neglect (Henry, 2017). Such impoverished living conditions have meant that registration at school has not necessarily translated into attendance. I observed attendance being affected by parents taking children out of schools to work, primarily to help support their families. Often, this is the only means of income for many families who live in poverty. Lack of resources and support has also increased truancy in the two schools (Ministry of Education Guyana, National Truancy Report, 2018).

Economic background is important because many children in Guyana from impoverished backgrounds face challenges in obtaining the essential resources needed to attend school. Joseph, Amanda, Sabrina, Holly, Jonese and many other children live with mothers who are single parents, living in an impoverished state. Single parents in Guyana face many challenges with little or no support from society such as an effective state welfare system. Moreover, any welfare provided by the state is not adequate to support children with SEND. For example, the government offers uniform vouchers, some feeding programmes and some of the necessary stationery, but these are not adequate to cover the resources needed for a child to attend school. On one hand, some parents like Sally (see excerpt below) also choose to invest their limited resources in the child who they perceive as being able to excel in education rather than the child with an impairment.

**Sally- The mother of a child with a physical disability (Field notes, October, 2018)**

*Lidon, you know a mi alone a mind these picknies. Mi nah works no way. I know that he can't mek it in education. He done disable already. What he go do in school? He a my burden. Mi shame to carry. Why me a go send him ah school fuh pressa them teacha. He ah go waste time. Me poor, me nah get money like that. So, the little mi have me a spend it pon he sista. At least she nah disable she go stand wan betta chance to do good in school.*

[Lidon, you are aware that I raise my children alone. I am not employed. My son cannot make it in education. He is disabled. What can he do in school? He is my burden. He is my shame to carry. I cannot send him to school to pressure the teachers. He will waste their time. I am poor. I have to spend the little money on his sister's education. She is not disabled; she has a chance.]

On the other hand, Joseph highlights being suppressed by his mother's embedded belief in the individual deficit discourses. Joseph also shows a child who is unhappy because his exclusion from mainstream education was contingent on his mother subordinated position and her embedded belief that he is a burden and will place pressure on mainstream teachers.

**Joseph (Field notes, October, 2018)**

*I can write. My hands are fine. I love reading. I can do mental mathematics. Mommy does not think I can do well in school, yet I have to help my sister with her work. I read a lot at home. My neighbour gives me the newspapers daily after he has read them. Mommy is poor, and she will sacrifice my chances for my sister's, and it makes me sad. I don't want to hate anyone, but sometimes I am very sad, and I wish I could die.*

Also, Joseph was denied the opportunity to have educational experiences because of lack of resources. He felt his mother was biased and neglected his needs. Neglecting a child's right to an education is considered a form of child abuse in Guyana (Henry, 2017). Sally was struggling to make ends meet and educating two children would have put great stress on her family finances. She was struggling to balance these conflicting demands. She feels herself to be powerless. Joseph's sadness (maybe depression) almost certainly doesn't have a simple single cause. It is certainly part of the picture that he can't go to school, but sibling rivalry is also part of the picture – he seems to feel that his mother loves his sister more than she does him – and the family's poverty adds to that.

Contextualising Loreman's Framework and Booths and Ainscow's *Index* (see chapter two) would be challenged significantly by some of the sociocultural and traditional legacies encountered in the two schools, such as quasi inclusion practices, poverty, suicide, child neglect, racism, socioeconomic status and other negative social indicators in Guyana's culture (see chapter five to seven). From my observations, Joseph could have participated fully in the education systems. For example, he had excellent verbal language skills, a key requirement for success within mainstream schools in Guyana. Another critical factor in this situation is that besides being physically impaired, this was a male child. Reports in Guyana on mainstream education indicate males are underperforming in schools due partly to not having their learning needs met (Sam, 2015; Symposium on Boys Education Guyana, 2018).

Children like Joseph from families with low education, negative attitudes towards schooling, or poverty-stricken single parents have a higher likelihood of dropping out (Harrison-Ouma, Ting, & Pasha, 2017; Heckman, 2011; Ouma et al., 2017; Torche, 2010 & Richardson, 2010). A child dropping out of school does not occur overnight but

is usually the result of a long process of child disengagement (Ouma et al., 2017; Heckman, 2008, 2011; Lyche, 2010). Children with SEND in the two schools need to first be allowed to be engaged in mainstream schools, and the barriers to engagement need to be reduced. Sally began to disengage Joseph at home because she felt he is unsuitable for school and because she couldn't afford it. These and other factors specific to the Guyanese context suggest that the participants do not fit the paradigm of Loreman's Framework and the Index, thus, creating a social challenge to their implementation in Guyana. This situation does not mean that Loreman's Framework and the Index are not valid in the area of study as application of a theory does not mean it needs to fit exactly. In fact, Guyana's entire educational processes rest on theories, generalizations and concepts from the global North.

Second, Loreman, (2009) posited that:

***All children are welcomed and valued.***

Welcoming and valuing all children is not just the responsibility of mainstream schools as this is also comes from the home and from within the community. The school is just one agent in society serving the education and socialisation function. However, schools can offer experiences and socialisation that a child may not receive from home living in a disadvantaged environment, thus, the role of schools is critical. Nevertheless, merely including children with SEND in mainstream schools does not equate to valuing them. This study revealed that children face many social challenges and isolation from their peers who are not assessed as having SEND. Such discriminatory practices of exclusion call into question the extent to which such children are, in fact, valued (see Social Role Valorisation, in chapter two; Expressing Opposition, in chapter seven; as well as Experiences of Depersonalisation in chapter six). While the doors of mainstream schools are open to children with SEND, according to Mrs. Archer (quoted at the beginning of this chapter), the discourses, attitudes and perceptions are not constitutive of valuing children with SEND.

In particular, children with SEND need an education system which can address the effect of broader social inequalities (Anastasiou et al., 2018; Faubert, 2012; Mattingly & Suubi, 2016). This literature cited above recognises the need to provide diverse support as required by individuals. The current economic situation and budgetary priorities in Guyana makes it challenging to provide the diverse support as required by

individuals. The challenges Guyana face providing the diverse support as required by individuals will challenge fully contextualising and implementing Loreman's Framework and the *Index* in Guyana.

The third, fourth and fifth features of Loreman's (2009) framework state:

***All children learn in regular, heterogeneous classrooms with same-age peers. All children follow substantively similar programs of study, with a curriculum that can be adapted and modified if needed. Modes of instruction are varied and responsive to the needs of all.***

The third feature is already partly implemented in the two schools as Guyana tries to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: *Quality Education*. For example, discussed in some detail above, Guyana has begun including children with SEND in regular mainstream heterogeneous classrooms, with peers of similar ages. They all follow the same standardised programme but without any modifications which goes against the expectations of fourth and fifth features. Specifically, the sixth feature requires that '*modes of instruction must be varied and responsive to the needs of all*'. However, the teachers are unsupported and too much is expected of them with few resources, making varying their modes of instruction challenging (see Jones's and Junior Bob's experience in chapter five). They were focused on providing for children based on learning styles even when the children have learning disabilities.

There are many studies (see Bjork et al., 2013; Cook et al., 2009; Hall-Rivera, 2017; Jones, 2012; Massa & Mayer, 2006; Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013) which challenge the usefulness of learning styles on the grounds that it is not responsive to the diversities in children. I observed that learning styles are what the teachers use as a guiding principle to cater for the needs of all children. However, they did provide a starting point to meet the needs of the children. This was also because Guyana subscribes mainly to *performance learning* using a *competitive goal structure* at Grade Two; Grade Four; Grade Six; Grade Nine. All children take national performance assessments at the four identified grades. With this focus, there is no time or inclination for teachers to focus on each child's learning in an individualistic goal structure. As teachers try to achieve high passes, they do not vary modes of instruction responsive to the needs of all. There is also limited consideration for any student who lags behind.

This normalised approach was observed while I was a participant in Ravi, Latchman, Rawl, Jonese, Holly, Amera, Sabrina, Besham, Tom, Bellie and Boyo's classes.

The six and seventh features of Loreman's (2009) theory state:

***All children contribute to regular school and classroom learning activities and events; all children are supported to make friends and to be socially successful with their peers.***

The behaviour of children is crucial for successful school experiences. Research indicates that children, who are engaged, both academically and socially, tend to stay in school (OECD, 2011a). Some children are fated to fail (see chapter five and other children (see specific examples of Amera and Jonese's experience in chapter five) present challenges which further reflect the deficits in mainstream schools. The highlighted deficits obstruct teachers from engaging the children both academically and socially. These socialisation challenges have also been documented in chapters five, six and seven. In relation to this, research findings suggest that children direct their attention away from learning when they experience negative emotions (OECD, 2011a).

Negative attitudes and behaviours affect the learning experiences for all children and can be linked to lower performance (Blazar & Matthew, 2017; Dumont et al., 2010; Pfeiffer & Cornelissen, 2010). Children without SEND indicated that they preferred that the children with SEND be taught in separate classrooms (see Thomas' statements in chapter seven and stay in your lane experiences in chapter six). Moreover, children with SEND are blamed for 'slowing down' the teaching and learning process. Several teachers like Miss Johnson, Miss Singh, Mrs. Archer and Miss Long blamed children with SEND for causing the schools' poor academic performance on national standardised tests. They all have negative attitudes and practices which exclude children with SEND in their classes.

In relation to the socialisation principle in Loreman's Framework, it is vital to support children with SEND in making friends so that they can be socially successful with their peers (Rice et al., 2008). However, children without SEND at both schools seemed unwilling to build relationships and connections with children with SEND. The unwillingness to build relationships and connections produced some of the challenges children with SEND faced in forging a social identity. This is another challenge for the contextualisation of Loreman's Framework for use in Guyana.

The final feature of Loreman's (2009) Framework states:

***Adequate resources and staff training are provided within the school and district to support inclusion.***

Investing resources and time on socialisation and learning during the early years allows children to acquire skills and knowledge that shape their development (Ouma et al., 2017; Heckman, 2011). These include cognitive, non-cognitive and socio-emotional skills, which facilitate the acquisition of skills and knowledge in the subsequent years of education. Guyana has limited resources and a considerable portion of the resources allocated to education in Guyana goes towards infrastructure (building schools and equipping them), and to salaries for teachers and improving public performances in mathematics and science. Therefore, the allocation from the national budget for SEND is minimal. It is often inadequate to provide essential support materials and training for teachers (Ajodhia-Andrews, 2007; Andrews & Frankel, 2010; Cheong et al, 2018; Fraser, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2018; Mitchell, 2005). Therefore, with or without Loreman's Framework or any other social model framework, limited resources inevitably challenge inclusion practices.

In relation to training staff in SEND, there are short courses on aspects of SEND available at National Centre for Education Recourses Development (NCERD), but the head teachers indicated that the teachers seldom access these courses. Both head teachers also organise continuous professional development sessions within their schools on SEND. However, these sessions are often facilitated by persons who are not experts in the field and have limited training in the area such as attending a short workshop or seminar before conducting the sessions. Therefore, the information presented is generalised and often unrelated to the specific challenges faced in the classroom.

### ***8.1.2 Analysis of Booth and Ainscow's Index***

I will now analyse the features of the *Index* as was previously done with Loreman's Framework/ Evaluative Tool.

The first feature of Booth and Ainscow's (2002, 2011) *Index* concerns:



### *Putting inclusive values into action.*

Guyana has gradually begun implementing some measures to bolster inclusivity within mainstream education. For example, the SEND unit of the Ministry of Education requires all mainstream schools to write a SEND policy. One of the challenges which remains is how do we (Guyanese) arbitrate what could be considered inclusive values in Guyana and more specifically in each region (see chapter one) and individual schools. Loreman's Framework and Booth and Ainscow's *Index* cannot be adopted without situational positioning and contextualisation of the level of inclusion that exists and is conceptualised in Guyana.

As stated in chapter two, Loreman's Framework as a social model of disability framework may be rendered irrelevant unless it is adequately contextualised to local educational practice, context, culture, and circumstance (Forlin et al., 2013 & Loreman, 2009). Similarly, the *Index* has been adapted for use in many other countries and translated into thirty-seven languages (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Booth & Black-Hawkins, 2001, 2005). However, there was no indication of how the *Index* was adapted by the individual countries. Evidence was not presented on the cultural challenges faced or social acceptance levels or barriers which make contextualisation of the *Index* challenging. Further, there was no evidence of what impact contextualisation had on individual mainstream school practices and the experiences of all children.

An international team supported by UNESCO examined how versions of the *Index* could be developed for economically impoverished areas of countries of the South (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2002). This team focused on how versions of the *Index* could be developed for financially poor areas of states of the global South, without taking the entire sector of mainstream education system into consideration. The international team supported by UNESCO encouraged the view that the *Index*, review materials and process of the *Index* have wide application range. The team also made some suggestions on how the *Index* can be improved with emphasis on local cultures, policies and practices. The international team's analysis indicated that there is also need for more examples on the range of work of the *Index* (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2002). My study, through the third research question, assessed the range of the *Index* in two mainstream schools. In Guyana, children with SEND are being placed in schools

within local school districts with vastly different cultures and versions of inclusion. There were also cultural, historical and social diversities which the contextualisation process is contingent upon but which were not taken into account – for example, educating indigenous children with impairment. A major factor overlooked by team from UNESCO was the political regime and the agenda on education put forward by governments.

In summary, therefore, supporting schools in diverse societies scattered across Guyana is challenging and adds to the obstacles in the local context when contextualising and implementing the *Index* since neighbouring communities have vastly different cultures. This challenge is also significant in the area where the two schools are located, where traditional cultures still categorised children with SEND as of less value, difficult to teach and even unsuited for school. Putting inclusive values into action in these areas within Guyana depend extensively upon contextualisation with consideration for geographical challenges. According to Booth, (2005) and Gajewski, (2017) true inclusion practices involve ethical principles and considerations for all possible challenges and barriers to inclusion.

The second feature states:

***Viewing every life and every death as of equal worth.***

The value of every life in a society directly depends on the society's consciousness of the worth of each living individual and the impact of each death on society. However, some lives are seen as having more value, particularly in traditional rural communities. Phenomenologically, death is non-being and to view every death as being of equal worth, society needs to see the purpose of each life as having equal value despite individual differences (Byock, 2002). In Guyana, individual differences especially impairments, constitute the value of individual lives. For example, like the parents mentioned earlier in the paragraph, (almost) all children with impairments in this study felt their lives were not valued the same as those of their peers without impairments. Using this feature of the *Index* to increase the value associated with the life of disabled children is a great opportunity to support its contextualisation in Guyana. However, the process will not be simple since cultural changes are required and the *Index* does not provide guidance on achieving cultural changes.

The third and fourth features state:

***Supporting everyone to feel that they belong; increasing participation for children and adults in learning and teaching activities, relationships and communities of local schools.***

In Guyana, supporting everyone so they feel like they belong is contested by racial and cultural conflicts. Racism is still prevalent between the two dominant ethnic groups, i.e. East Indians and Africans, which has its antecedents in the systems of slavery and indentureship during the colonial era (see chapter five). During the March 2020 national elections, school reports found East Indian children calling their African peers *'Black Dogs and Apes'*. Also, African students called the East Indian peers, *'Long Belly Dirty Indians'*. In this study, Amera was branded a *'crazy bush girl'* by her teacher's overt racism. Increasing participation for children with SEND who are of a different ethnic and cultural group than the dominant one in the school community is, therefore, challenging. This was detailed in some children's experiences described in chapters five and six. Discriminating against marginalised ethnic groups is often the result of political factors and residual colonial legacies in the two schools. The extract below highlights children speaking about the racist actions of their mainstream teachers.

**Conversation in Class, 2018** (The teacher left the class to use her mobile phone)

**Rawl:** (Calmly) *Mr Lashley! You do not know how we do suffer in that racial teacher class, and nobody listens when we complain. It is truly frustrating, and Mr. Rohit makes it hard for us to learn. He would play games with the Indian children and never with the Black children.*

**L L:** *I have been in that class a few times, but I never saw that.*

**Rawl:** (Calmly) *He pretends to be kind to everyone whenever you are around. When you are not around, he is only helpful to Coolie children. Before you come to this school that is how he was always. Today I asked him to do over the example, and he told me he does not have time for that. An Coolie boy asked after me and Mr. Rohit redid the example twice.*

Rawl highlights that some practices by Mr. Rohit goes against the expectation of the third and fourth feature of the *Index*. Rawl highlights that Mr. Rohit's support to children is dependent upon their race. Biasn on racialised differences led the children to

feel as if they did not belong and decreased their participation in learning and teaching activities, relationships and socialisation within the communities of local schools (see chapter five). Like Rawl, Holly expressed similar feelings about Mr. Rohit.

*Holly discussed with other children at the back of the class about how Mr. Rohit, an East Indian teacher, does not like black children [Field notes, 2018].*

Holly and Rawl verbalised the discriminatory treatment they receive because of race differences. They indicated that racial and power tensions make it hard for them to learn. The children also used derogatory labels (Coolie, bush girl and Black) for themselves and the teacher. This is a reflection of a normalised practice and discourse in society. This supported by Danns (2014), who notes that it is a normalised for Guyanese people to use derogatory terms when referring to others of different ethnicity, especially in rural communities. This suggests and emphasises that with the contextualisation of the Index, racial biases would contribute challenges to inclusion.

Racial biases in the communities of the two schools are also defined on the bases of wealth, income, professional achievement and political and cultural status. The dynamics of class, ethnicity and culture are vital elements which individuals and groups combine to form identities. Children with SEND claimed that they felt that there were differences in their experiences and way they were socialised. The difference in the occurrence of this form of discrimination in Angel and Saints Primary School is constitutive of what Danns, (2014) calls a variation in identity.

Both frameworks emphatically state that children need to be supported to feel a sense of belonging and given opportunities to socialise and participate fully in all activities in the community and school. However, some inequalities, and negative perceptions, which place a limited value on children with SEND, run deeply in the cultures which dominate the communities of the two schools. Inequalities and negative perceptions create barriers when it comes to supporting children with SEND to feel a sense of belonging in mainstream schools. It also creates barriers and challenges to contextualising and implementing the Index.

The fifth and sixth features state:

***Reducing exclusion, discrimination, barriers to learning and participation; restructuring cultures, policies and practices to respond to diversity in ways that value everyone equally.***

Reducing exclusion, discrimination and other barriers to learning cannot be simply reduced within dominant discourse. Rather, these dominant discourses are challenged by subordinate ones like the social model of disability discourse being introduced in Guyana and begin to change – often in ways that still prop up the existing ruling class/elite. In addition, the subordinate discourse is likely to be contested and resisted in the communities of the two schools because of the differences in identity. The Ministry of Education Guyana (2018) has indicated that they are currently working on restructuring education policies and practices. While attempts to restructure the curriculum, policies and discourses are laudable, there are still discriminatory barriers from within the Ministry of Education. In 2018, while I was conducting fieldwork, the Minister of Education, in her budget presentation, said that it was not necessary for her to know the religious and cultural festivals in Guyana. Thereafter, most of the religious groups viewed the minister's words as forms of discrimination against children who shared their religious beliefs and practices. The religious groups felt that the Minister of Education is Guyana's national inclusion authority for mainstream education and as such need to not only know the cultures but respect them.

UNESCO (2014, 2017) stated that countries need to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all children to education especially those who are seen as vulnerable because of culture, background, socioeconomic status and/or SEND. Some countries of the global South work to identify and remove barriers caused by lack of resources by supplementing these resources through grants to parents. Some countries provide support through awareness campaigns with the aim of enabling every child with SEND to participate and achieve in mainstream settings (WHO & World Bank, 2011). Establishing inclusive schools is widely regarded as desirable for equality and human rights, and it has educational, social and economic benefits which could contribute to the valuing of children with SEND (Lentz, 2015; Murenzi & Mebratu, 2013; UNESCO, 2017) and make education experiences meaningful to them. The implementation of this feature is likely to prove challenging in Guyana because of the absence of inclusion

guidelines for teachers and policies in the Education Act. Guyana needs more than a framework to identify and remove barriers to enable every child to participate and achieve meaningfully in mainstream settings. It needs policies and guidelines in the Education Act that will be supported by a contextualised or constituted social model framework,

The seventh and eighth features state:

***Linking education to local and global realities; learning from the reduction of barriers for some children to benefit children more widely.***

Globally, there have been many advances in reducing barriers for some children so that all children can benefit from inclusion of children with SEND (Ouma et al., 2017; Thijs et al., 2008; UNESCO, 2017). In the Netherlands, education policy promotes integrating pupils with SEND into mainstream education with adequate support. While core curriculum objectives are required to be covered in all schools and inspectors monitor how the content specified in these objectives is implemented, the schools have significant freedom to organise the curriculum so that it responds to the needs and capabilities of their children. While developing these custom-made curricula puts additional demands on schools and teachers, it is also a possible mechanism for ensuring the quality of education for children with SEND, wherever that education takes place. However, Guyanese mainstream teachers do not have the autonomy to organise the curriculum to meet the needs of their students. They are expected to follow the standardised process implemented in education (chapter seven), which presents another potential challenge to fully contextualising the *Index* and Loreman's Framework for wider use in Guyana.

The ninth and tenth features state:

***Viewing differences between children and between adults as resources for learning. Acknowledging the rights of children.***

Diversity can be a useful tool in teaching and learning interaction. Children with SEND possess some unique qualities and differences which could help to enhance the experiences and socialisation for all children. These also provide an opportunity to implement and contextualise the *Index*. For example, Amera can speak a native language (Lokono); Triscia is a poet, and Joel reads music and plays the piano all of

which are exceptionalities which could recuperate the experiences and participation for all children. These diversities are overlooked because the children with SEND are seen as having reduced ability. As was stated in chapter five, there is need for awareness-raising in the two schools and communities about SEND. Ideas for awareness-raising sessions about tolerance and valuing differences and diversities have been put forward by Bouille, (2013, p. 13), and Ebersold (2017), which could help the *Index* and Loreman's Framework to be seen as a tool to contribute to changing society's identity of children with SEND.

Using children's differences in a culture where differences are used as indicators for social stratification and class separation will be highly contested. Using children's diversities could help the society to grow collectively and become less discriminatory in discourses and practices.

The eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth features state:

***Improving schools for staff and parents/carers as well as children; emphasising the development of school communities and values, as well as achievements and fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and surrounding communities.***

In the focus groups, teachers indicated that they found collaborating with their colleagues, parents and the children resulted in them thinking of innovative ways to best respond to differences between children. The benefits teachers experience through collaboration creates an opportunity to acquire their support to help contextualise these three features and the entire *Index*. The teachers' collaboration is explored later in the chapter. Collaborating with their colleagues also gave teachers greater confidence to experiment with different teaching practices (Messiou et al., 2016) and increase children's achievement through enhanced learning experiences. Collaborating with their colleagues also reduces mainstream teachers' frustration and uncertainty about making provisions for children with SEND in their classes (Messiou et al., 2016; Surour & Ashour, 2015). Providing a platform for teachers to collaborate could improve the schools for staff and parents/carers as well as children. The *Index* can provide the platform for developing school communities and values, as well as achievements and fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and surrounding communities.

The final feature states:

***Recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.***

Inclusion in society is essential for social and economic development and becomes vital as education becomes more inclusive because teachers need to respond to a greater diversity of student needs (Messiou & Ainscow, (2015). Recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society would require teacher development primarily in classrooms, where practice develops, using the expertise available within the society. This could contribute to contesting the dominant discourse which promotes the exclusion of children with SEND from schools and, therefore, represents a denial of education by society. Contextualising the *Index* for this purpose will require cultural barriers to be overcome but it is possible with support from the government's emergent inclusion discourse. Loreman's *Framework* and Booth and Ainscow's *Index* taken together provide a comprehensive basis to be used as guidance in making mainstream education in Guyana more inclusive for children with SEND once it is appropriately contextualised. Using Loreman's (2009) *Framework* and Booth and Ainscow's (2002, 2011) *Index* along with the evidence gathered in this study, I have attempted to formulate an inclusive education framework from a Southern perspective, specifically contextualised for Guyana to better support such children and also aid in the contextualisation of both frameworks.

## **8.2 Southern Inclusive Education Framework for Guyana**

The focus groups also revealed that the teachers felt ill-prepared, ineffective, unsupported and feared failure due to having limited resources and facilities to support children with SEND. Teachers' fear of failure is not a new phenomenon but is magnified because of their portrayal by the governmental as lone capable professionals. When I first started teaching the Grade Six class in Guyana in 2002 at age 17, I was also afraid to fail. A fellow teacher who was my senior refused to have her son placed in my class because she felt the children in my class would fail the National Grade Six Assessments. I am still afraid of failure even though I now have over eighteen years of experience. Teachers' effectiveness is often questioned, and this contributes to fear of failure. Such negative views of practice reduce teacher's confidence in their



professional practices (Bindhu & Sudheeshkumar, 2006; Muijs, et al., 2014; Perry, Stupnisky, Daniels & Haynes, 2008). As a result, teachers' fear of failure made their interactions with children with SEND more problematic and could also challenge how Loreman (2009) as well as Booth and Ainscow's (2002, 2011) school-based social model work can be contextualised and adapted across Guyana. Teachers' fear of failure also provides the platform to introduce the Southern Inclusive Education Framework.

### **Southern Inclusive Education Framework**

For Guyanese mainstream schools to be fully inclusive, the following features need to be fully implemented:

1. All neighbourhood schools and local school districts need to be free from discriminatory practices like institutional discrimination and inequalities as well as any form of victimisation or preferential treatment for children based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender, background, culture, socioeconomic status, parents' sexual orientation, and impairment (Guyana, Prevention of discrimination Act 1997, Cap. 99: 08). All neighbourhood schools and local school districts need to be free from any barrier which may result in preferential treatment of specific groups of children and increased vulnerability of other groups or restricted participation in experiences and socialisation offered at school.
2. Reasonable adjustments and modifications need to be made to the structures and systems currently in place within mainstream schools to reduce barriers to access that are constituted or embedded in the discourses, discursive practices, structures and systems of the schools.
3. All children need to be given the support needed in the mainstream school in which they are placed. This support is not limited to curricula and educational materials/resources but need to extend to social, emotional and physical support as the individual case necessitates.
4. All children need to be treated with love and respect and be valued and appreciated for their individual characteristics. Each child needs to be given opportunities to showcase his/her talents and such talents and uniqueness need

to be celebrated, especially for children who are considered disadvantaged or vulnerable because of impairment(s).

5. Opportunities need to be provided for all children to form social bonds and relations with peers so that they can also create connections with others who share similar and different interests, aspirations, skills, and abilities. In addition, compassion committees could be established to ensure awareness and sensitisation of all stakeholders to children' diversities and potential to contribute to society's development to increase the value placed on all children.
6. All opportunities, experiences and socialisation need to be flexible and adaptable to individual differences while maintaining equal standards, expectations and outcomes for all. Opportunities, experiences and socialisation for all children need to be provided, based on individual needs, culture, and readiness rather than on the basis of learning styles.
7. Teachers, educators, support staff and other stakeholders need to receive compulsory training on SEND, inclusion, differentiated instruction, inclusive learning and assessment. There also need to be continuous professional development sessions to enhance local capacity to promote inclusion. More local studies need to be carried out to enhance children with SEND experiences in mainstream schools.
8. Due to the diverse cultures, geography and demography of the education districts in Guyana, inclusive policies, while broadly adhering to national policy, need to be based on the local context. In addition, local teachers need to receive support from national specialists as required and/or requested.
9. All local schools need to attempt to be more than an educational institution in the local communities. They need to also strive to be avenues where all (children and members of the society) can have the opportunities to collaborate and help each other advance in an inclusive environment.
10. All neighbourhood schools need to emphasise not only academic achievements at national assessment, but also highlight skills attainment, sports, arts and creativity, music and these wider areas of education need to be of equal merit to academic performance/achievement.

11. All schools need to actively try to reduce discriminatory behaviours and practices toward children with impairments in society even when they are not placed in mainstream schools.
12. Schools could provide support for children from disadvantaged sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds to remove barriers created by poverty and other social disadvantages and attempt to reduce the feeling of disablement experienced by children with SEND.
13. Schools could also ensure everyone honours the national motto “one people, one nation, and one destiny. Equal we are alive and in death to the value of the community and country’s history, growth and development”.

### **8.3 The Inclusive Checker created for Southern mainstream primary classrooms**

I developed the Inclusive Checker, a rating instrument for Southern mainstream primary classrooms (see Appendix E, p. 354) to act as a resource tool to complement the Southern Inclusive Education Framework. The Inclusive Checker has fifteen (15) inclusion criteria, rated using the Likert Scale (5- Always, 4- Often, 3- Satisfactory, 2- Sometimes, 1- Seldom and 0- Never). The maximum possible score is 75 points. Teachers need to achieve a minimum of 45 points to be considered to be meeting basic inclusive practices. It is intended to be a record maintained by the individual teacher and only made public at the teacher’s request or with their consent. It was designed to support the teachers to improve their classroom practice to benefit all children. In sum, it was designed to help the teachers make the experiences of all children more pleasant, meaningful and rewarding. It provides a simple means for teachers to get immediate formative feedback on the experiences of all children especially those with SEND in their classes.

In schools, support staff have an impact on pupil attainment, behaviour and attitudes especially children with SEND (Blatchford et al., 2008). However, Guyanese mainstream teachers do not have support staff or any form of additional support in their classrooms, even though more children with SEND are now included. There need to be appropriate resources and any form of additional support teachers need to help children

in their classrooms (Bottle, 2005; Harwood, 2017; Polikoff & Koedel, 2017; Steiner, 2017; Steiner, et al., 2017). Overall, teachers lacked access both teaching resources and support staff. The inclusive checker was designed as a support tool for teachers.

Teachers typically enter mainstream teaching without adequate training specific to some area of teaching like SEND (Begeny & Martens, 2006; McNamara et al., 2017) and need ways to develop and monitor their skills and practices. Self-monitoring is a way of noting the presence, absence, or level of specific behaviour, and is one example of self-management (Allen, 2017; Cooper et al., 2007; Snead & Freiberg, 2017). Moreover, self-monitoring is a low-intensity, secondary prevention strategy designed to improve teachers' self-management skills and to improve their effectiveness, inclusive practice and social development as they provide experiences for children with SEND.

In relation to self-improvement, teachers who self-monitored made better decisions resulting in better student performance (Allen, 2017; Allinder et al., 2000; Jarvela & Jarvenoja, 2011; Snead & Freiberg, 2017; Zimmerman, 2008) and were more in control of the factors which can influence the experiences of children in the classroom (Allen, 2017; De Bruin et al., 2001; Peterson, et al., 2006; Shogren et al., 2017; Snead & Freiberg, 2017; Zimmerman, 2008). In general, teachers who engage in this reflective practice, help children by mobilising better learning experiences and strengthen their skills to cope in schools (Harris et al., 2005; McNamara et al., 2017; Wolters, 2011). With regard to the present study, most of the teachers at the two participating schools who self-monitored became more inclusive in the experiences provided to children with SEND.

### ***8.3.1 Application of the Inclusive Checker***

During focus group discussions with teachers at the two schools, we agree on an approach to implement the use of the Inclusive Checker. An initial self-assessment was carried out by teachers with additional assessments made fortnightly thereafter. This produced a total of twelve self-assessments throughout my study. The focus group discussions became the forum where we generally discussed the outcomes of the self-monitoring practice, which allowed the teachers to get support for improvement through collaboration. Teachers were also advised that they could enhance their collaborative practice with other teachers, mentors or friends within the school to

enhance the effectiveness of the inclusive checker. This was important since the inclusive checker is a tool for improvement and not a tool for evaluating and judging teachers' competences.

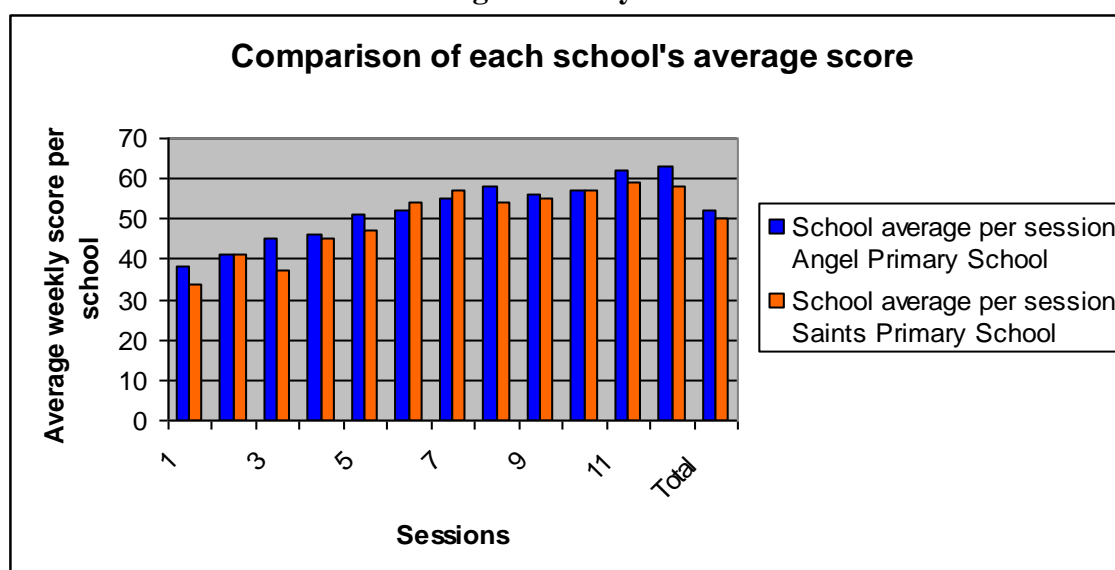
**Table: 8.1: A comparison of the fortnightly self-monitoring assessment reports between Saints and Angel Primary Schools.**

Sessions	School average per session		Variation (+)
	Angel Primary School	Saints Primary School	
1	38	34	4 APS
2	41	41	0
3	45	37	7 APS
4	46	45	1 APS
5	51	47	4 APS
6	52	54	2 SPS
7	55	57	2 SPS
8	58	54	4 APS
9	56	55	1 APS
10	57	57	0
11	62	59	3 APS
12	63	58	2 APS
Total	52	50	2 APS

APS- Angel Primary School    SPS- Saints Primary School

(The raw scores for individual teachers at each school from which this comparative analysis was produced are available in the appendices).

**Chart: 8.1: A comparison of the fortnightly self-monitoring assessment reports between Saints and Angel Primary School.**



There were no significant differences in the average scores achieved between the schools. The average for the twelve sessions of self-assessment for Angel Primary School was 52 points (Table 8.1), while for Saints Primary School it was 50 points (Table 8.1). Both schools were within the same range of inclusiveness on the grading system of the inclusive checker. However, children's feedback together with my own observations suggested that the teachers at both schools were not achieving the minimum accepted average for inclusiveness (see chapter five through seven). They achieve less than minimum accepted average for inclusiveness.

Saints Primary School teachers started at an overall four point average (Table 8.1) below that of Angel Primary School teachers. Saints teachers showed slightly more growth over the whole series from the initial stage of using the inclusive checker. The scores had equalised by the second session when both schools scored a 41 point overall average across each week (Table 8.1). There were weeks when the teachers in the two schools judged themselves to be equally inclusive e.g. in sessions 2 and 10 (Table 8.1). During session 2, both schools were a part of a child-friendly school competition organised by the Ministry of Education. During education month (September), all schools make an effort to demonstrate the things they could do in different areas to improve educational delivery. Their improved inclusive identity was dependent upon the child friendly competition. The implication here is that if teachers can mobilise and deploy inclusive support for education month, they can do it continuously with support and resources.

Individually, the overall ratings for teachers remained at minimum accepted average for inclusiveness on their self –assessment over the twelve sessions. One teacher at Angel Primary School achieved level B, which is judged as very good. Three teachers failed to achieve the overall 45-point average at Saints Primary School while only one teacher was unable to achieve the overall 45-point average at Angel Primary School. The three teachers who were unable to achieve the minimum 45-point average at Saints Primary School were the teachers whom the children in my study spoke of with feelings of hurt, disappointment and fear. Teachers reported throughout the feedback sessions that the children in their classes were taking note of the changes and offering to help their teachers. I asked the children who were a part of the study in each school about changes to their classroom experiences and how they felt about the changes. Selected responses are presented below:

### **Devi: Angel Primary School**

*My teacher is friendlier and more approachable. She went from the wicked witch in Oz to Cinderella's fairy godmother. I think I am beginning to like her now. I believe all humans are equal and my pastor at church preached on treating all God's creations equally. My teacher is now trying to treat everybody equal. However, she still needs to get better at talking to us.*

Devi's teacher, Mrs. Tate, constituted a positive identity by making small positive changes in the daily experiences for children with SEND. Mrs. Tate's recuperated teachers' identity by coding her behaviour with reflections of identity which are admired by the children.

### **Daniel: Angel Primary School**

*Sir is always the man<sup>6</sup>. He cares about us, and now he is making teaching aids which he does not like doing. He lets us help. He always makes time for my friend, who is slow in Mathematics. Sir stays back after school and helps him out. Sir is indeed the man.*

From the extracts above, it is clear that children with SEND recognise when their mainstream teachers are making an effort to include them, which is empowering for the children who are marginalised. The expression “*Sir is the man*” suggests that the child thinks the teacher has the power to show care and share his power with children who feel valued by his effort and practice. The expression also reflects a positive identity indicating that the teacher is being inclusive.

### **Rawl: Angel Primary School**

*I know Sir never like Black children. He used to treat them Coolie children better. They always used to get first preference in everything. I see a little change now. He is trying not to be racial. They must have threatened to fire him if he continues his racism. I think the Coolie children vex about this.*

The Children spoke about racism in chapter five and six, and the conversation suggests how a small difference in the children's perception of racial discrimination changes the

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<sup>6</sup>. The expression ‘the man’ in the Guyanese context means someone who does the right and honourable thing. This individual is respected and appreciated by the mass.

social dynamics positively for all children. Mr. Rohit's change in behaviour had not convinced Rawl of a positive change. Rawl felt it was contingent upon a threat or a selfish desire and thus questioned the value in the teacher's effort.

### **Macy: Saints Primary School**

*I think Miss is trying harder to make us pass our National Grade Six Assessment. She must want a promotion or something. She created a handshake we do with her every morning and comes out with us some playtime. I tell you, this woman was my teacher three times already and she never comes to the playground, except on school sports. When Miss dress with her fancy clothes, she does not want anyone to touch her. She was a cold beast who is now warm and affectionate.*

This extract, and those above, suggest change is possible, making the mainstream school experiences better for children with SEND. Change, which benefits all children, is positive, even when children are surprised by it and compare it to a Sci-Fi movie. This child is using discourse to reflect changes seen in a teacher whose actions and identity used to represent the dominant cultural practices and expectations in Guyana.

### **Belie: Saints Primary School**

*My teacher is principal from the movie, Matilda. She does not make teaching aids. She writes the work on the chalkboard and explains it. After which, she tells us to copy it in our notebook and work the exercises or questions she puts up after the notes. I look over at the teacher in the class next door who is fantastic. They are all teachers. It sometimes makes me want to stay home or go back to a special school. I wish we could have a Miss Honey like in Matilda who cares for everybody.*

Mrs. Wright shaped an identity coded in Mrs. Honey's character in a movie which reflects positive emotional support. Emotional maltreatment in schools psychologically hurts children (Hyman & Snook, 1999 as cited in Florin, 2002; Wilkinson & Bowyer, 2017). Children with SEND were hurt by the lack of resources and skills to cater for their diverse needs. When children with SEND are affected in mainstream schools, it creates added barriers to their present and future experiences and socialisation. The description of Mrs. Wright suggests that she was very intimidating to the children and



her power seems to project fear into the children. This was why the child indicated that they were always longing to be in the parallel class where there were less projections of fear or superior power as associated with the principal in Matilda. This situation made the children's experiences in her class psychologically harmful.

Florin (2002) reports on an incident concerning a student who provided an insightful description of a traumatic event caused by the attitude of one of her teachers towards her and her learning: *It is like throwing a stone in a lake. For a couple of moments, the water ripples which affects the initial calm, but after a few moments, everything returns to normal. At the bottom of the lake something has changed, a stone appeared. It will remain there forever.* Therefore, lasting effects seem to be created when teachers behave negatively in the presence of children who are emotionally vulnerable (see chapter five through seven).

It is also clear from the extracts above that some of the children questioned the motives behind their teachers change in practice. They felt that the teachers were motivated by gaining more power, a promotion, reward or personal benefit or because they were sanctioned to display a more positive attitude and different practice. There were some teachers who were genuinely making efforts to be inclusive despite the challenges while there were others who seemed to be still embedded in the dominant discourse concerning the unsuitability of children with SEND for mainstream school.

### ***8.3.2 Reflections of teachers who participated in self-monitoring***

Some teachers reflected on participating in self- monitoring using the inclusive checker. A selection of reflective statements is provided below.

#### **Miss Thom (Teacher – Angel Primary School)**

*At first, I felt like this is one more piece of paperwork. I did the first, and my score puzzled me especially after I did the post-assessment discussion with Mr Lashley. I started to think of ways that I could make my class more inclusive. I began improving practices in my classroom using the items on the form. Smiling more with the child with SEND was having a positive impact in my classroom. After a while, the children started to make the greetings unique and saying to each other this is how we will greet each other in this class. This was creating a*

*singular identity for my class. I also found that I was getting less quickly frustrated. As the weeks went by, it became routine.*

Although the embedded practices of the negative discourses on SEND had been the routine in the schools, an introduction of a competing, positive discourse deployed through a social model approach that was accepted became a routine which benefitted all children. It also caused the teachers to reflect positively about their power to influence practices and discourses.

**Mr Brown (Teacher – Angel Primary School)**

*I did the first form out of curiosity. I thought all my actions were in the best interest of the children. It was surprised to see the low score I got on the first sheet. I was disappointed even though I scored myself. It goes to show that sometimes the practices you have been using for a very long time may no longer be effective. I want my children to have the best. What I must point out is that sometimes being more inclusive requires resources and support which mainstream teachers here do not receive, not even from parents.*

Teachers' powers lie in the belief in the effectiveness of their practices and successes of the children. Teachers need resources and support; the checker is not a replacement for scarce resources but a support for mainstream teachers and children with SEND. It allows teachers to recognise where they can improve even when they do the assessment themselves.

**Mr. Gordon (Teacher – Saints Primary School)**

*I felt excited to try something new since it was aimed at ultimately improving my classroom practices for the benefit of all children. I did not see it as much paperwork because it was a single sheet form and all I had to do was place fifteen (15) ticks on it. I created a mini version of the form and gave it to my class rep. She completed it in collaboration with the other children; then I finished my form comparing it to the children's score. This taught me that the way we perceive things as teachers is not the same way children see it. Children with SEND who are most times silent are now sharing their views and contributing in class more.*

Teacher's perceptions of their school's culture are an essential factor in understanding their practice. Conceptions of teaching are rooted in teachers' beliefs about good teaching, which is how teachers construct the meaning of what is to be focused on in teaching. Teachers' conceptions of teaching, thus, have a strong impact on approaches and practices, and because of this, teachers do not adopt approaches to teaching that reach beyond the sophistication of their conceptions (Trigwell & Prosser, 1996; Orsolya, Päivi & Terhi, 2019). If the perceptions of children and the teachers' conceptions are taken into account, the discourses and practices on SEND can positively evolve. This evolution can then ensure improved interactions and experiences for children with SEND.

**Mr Tobby (Teacher – Saints Primary School)**

*I just did this form because I wanted to see if it would make an impact on the experiences of children in my classroom. Mr Lashley, you would understand my concern and scepticism at the start. This form has brought about changes in the classes in this school that I did not anticipate. I went from being cynical to being excited.*

It seems clear from this extract that such efforts to improve inclusiveness could convert even a sceptical teacher to a supporter of better experiences for children who are marginalised by institutionalised discriminatory practices, structures and discourses. An introduced a positive discourse and discursive practices can influence teachers' practices and the experiences of the children (Trigwell & Prosser, 1996; Orsolya et al, 2019).

## **8.4 Final Thoughts**

In this chapter, I have presented the challenges and opportunities available in the area of study within Guyana for Loreman's *Framework* and Booth and Ainscow's *Index* to be fully contextualised and adopted for extensive application. I have also presented a framework specifically tailored for the two schools under study. In addition, I have emphasised the need for cultural and traditional changes even if an inclusive framework is designed or contextualised for adoption in the schools. To support the changes to quasi inclusion practices, I have also presented a support tool for the southern inclusive

framework to enable teachers to overcome traditional and cultural resistance to inclusive practice.

Further, I discussed self-monitoring in the two schools and highlighted how it enhanced experiences and socialisation for all children. I have also attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of the newly developed Inclusive framework and Checker. The Inclusive Checker for Southern Mainstream Primary Classrooms can be adapted and tailored to mainstream classrooms from kindergarten to secondary school. Moreover, the Inclusive Checker could help teachers regulate their discourses, attitudes, and practices which could remove some of the barriers children with SEND face when they are included in mainstream schools.

## SECTION 4

### SUMMING IT UP

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#### **Chapter Nine: Conclusion**

*The mainstream classrooms at Saints Primary School are not suitable for children with disabilities. The physical arrangement of the classrooms and the structure of the school and furniture are unsuitable for children with physical disabilities. There are no specialised resources or additional adult presence in the classes. It is just the mainstream teacher alone. All these negative factors will contribute to negative experiences even for children with SEND.*

Mrs. John (Teacher) – Focus Group Discussions, 2018

#### **9.0 Introduction**

The contextualisation of Loreman's Framework and Booths and Ainscow's Index was explored, and the details were discussed in the previous chapter. Also, the successful contextualisation and wide use of Loreman's Framework and Booths and Ainscow's Index are contingent upon the challenges and opportunities which exist within the mainstream schools. These were also presented in chapter eight. A Southern Inclusive Checker was also introduced, and connections were made to the Southern Inclusive framework. In this chapter, I conclude the argument by with a summarised answer to each research question. I also reflect on the collective perspectives, conceptions and experiences expressed by teachers and children regarding the experiences in mainstream schools.

#### **9.1 Key Knowledge Emerged from Study**

Prior to conducting this study in Guyana, several researchers in inclusive education who were alluded to in chapter one (Ainscow, 2010; Ainscow & César, 2006; Andrews & Frankel, 2010; Singal, 2016 & Tomlinson, 2017) indicated that children with SEND

continue to be the most marginalised and excluded group. My study not only found that children with SEND in Guyana continue to be the most marginalised and excluded group. My study revealed that their marginalisation and exclusion is maintained by strategies and discourses engrained in the daily mundane practices in mainstream school and school communities. The daily mundane stereotypical practices are embedded in the deficit model of disability, tradition of racism, class and social stratification. For example the stay in your lane discourse (chapter six) is simultaneously used as a strategy to exclude and marginalise children with SEND. Children with SEND also use the stay in your lane discourse as a defence mechanism to avoid the depersonalising and negative experiences they endure once they appear to have stepped out of their prescribed lesser lanes to exclusion. A second example of the strategies and discourses used to marginalise and exclude children with SEND is their classification as untouchables.

When I read articles on inclusive education by Franck and Joshi, (2017), Kamenopoulou, (2018) and Meekosha, (2011) I thought of the variations in the conceptualisation and contextualisation of inclusive education in the global South and global North. However, in the many variations noted in traditions, culture and practices none prepared me for the conceptualisation of inclusive education in Guyana's situation. It is the conceptualisation of inclusive education in Guyana's situation that made me conclude that, inclusive education carries more than a colonising connotation as stated by Damiani et al., (2016). Inclusive Education in Guyana carries Biblical and socially plaguing connotations for children with SEND who do not have the means to escape the plague of mainstream school placement.

I show that the individual deficit/medical model in Guyana (as a case study of a global southern country) takes a different form from that experienced in the global North. In Guyana the individual deficit model in its dominant form sees disability as not only within the child but also as a sin, punishment from God, shame brought to the family. In the global North, whilst it is called the medical model because of the numerous 'expert' medical interventions and lack of concern for environmental or attitudinal adjustments that would make a much greater impact in the extent to which the disabled individual is enabled to participate, in Guyana, these expert medical interventions are not necessarily present. This means that 'enlightened' teachers clamour for them (see chapter five to seven) and rightly so but this – through globally Northern lenses is seen

regressively (all well and good when you have these things in place) and as the step before the more enlightened social model. In truth – this is because of the false dichotomy created between medical/social models.

What we have in Guyana, however, is the dominant of playing out of disability as sin:

- a. Referenced by parents as their shame – pupils kept at home
- b. Referenced by other pupils as deviant or sinful
- c. Referenced by teachers as ‘crazy’
- d. Depersonalised to stay in a lesser if not invisible lane
- e. Treated as ‘untouchable’ – two versions of this – either contagious or diseased, smelling bad, dirty etc or breakable if touched. – very like the figure of the leper in Foucault.

These children embody a curse and where they are, there is badness – people get hurt – by cricket balls for example. Things go wrong – like assemblies. They cannot participate therefore – for example in plays. Bringing the social model and making Loreman’s and Booth and Ainscow’s frameworks relevant has to involve addressing and resisting this central understanding about disability in Guyana. More work needs to be done on understanding the interconnectedness of SEND and racialised discourses – for example in cases like that of Amera, Rawl and Ramesh – so how ‘otherness’ and strangeness becomes craziness and madness and dangerous. Easy to label it SEND – evil. There also need more work on the difference that socio-economic status makes on the experiences of children with SEN/D in mainstream school as was reflected in chapter seven – specifically through the conversation I had with Ceon and Joel. As was highlighted with Ceon and Joel, and contrasted with Latchman’s, Cassy, Rosemary and others, parental social, economic and cultural power and connection determines who will willingly have to accept subjugation and those who can fight back through direct resistance to being subjugated.

My overarching question is:

**What are the experiences of children with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) placed in Guyana’s mainstream primary schools?**

The data indicated that the experiences of children with SEND placed in Guyana’s mainstream primary schools are mostly negative. I presented this in chapters five, six and seven. In almost all the situations observed or revealed by

the children with SEND, their experiences reflect direct attacks on them emphasising their impairment in an attempt to show their unsuitability for the mainstream education system.

The subsidiary questions are:

**What can we learn about children with SEND experiences and feelings concerning mainstream schooling from what they say and do?**

Through chapters five, six and seven, we have learnt that the mainstream school placement for children with SEND in two of Guyana's rural primary schools is an unpleasant experience. We have learnt that being bullied, depersonalised through the unfair distribution of institutional power and educational resources is a normalised practice. We have learnt that too much is expected of the mainstream teachers who are mostly unsupported and overwhelmed. We have learnt that the voices of children with SEND are not significant as the voices of their peers without SEND. We have learnt that mainstream school placement has not been effectively executed and as a result the placement is challenging and quite an ordeal for children, parents and teachers.

**What, if any, adjustments and curriculum modifications do mainstream teachers make to include children with SEND?**

Mainstream teachers in the two schools studied seldom made adjustments and curriculum modifications to include children with SEND. This was reflected in chapters five and six. Following the principles of the cradled deficit model of disability, it is the general expectations of the teachers that the children with SEND have to adjust to the curriculum and mainstream school. In addition, the hierarchical structure of the mainstream schools does not allow teachers to make curriculum adjustment and modifications without prior approval from the designated authority in the hierarchy. If they independently make curriculum modification decisions, they will be stepping out of their lane. Within the schools the demands on the limited resources are overwhelming. Teachers prefer to use the resource to support the children who do not have impairments. The children who they consider will pass standardised tests on the unmodified curriculum they delivered.



**Can Loreman (2009) and Booth and Ainscow’s (2002, 2011) school-based social model frameworks be adapted contextually so that it can be used more widely across Guyana, to support schools to make a positive difference to the experience of children with SEND in schools?**

I have presented a comprehensive answer to this question in chapter eight. The key knowledge acquired is that Loreman (2009) and Booth and Ainscow’s (2002, 2011) school-based social model frameworks has the potential to improve the experiences of children with SEND in Guyana. While there are many opportunities to adapt Loreman (2009) and Booth and Ainscow’s (2002, 2011) school-based social model frameworks contextually, to support schools to make a positive difference to the experience of children with SEND in schools, there are more engrained cultural and structural challenges supported by the deficit model of disability.

## **9.2 Collective Perceptions on the experiences of children**

There was an even representation of children by gender between the two schools. Fifty-eight (58) per cent of the participants were males and forty-two (42) per cent were females. This created a balance between the perspectives shared across the two research sites. Also, from observations, there were more males than females with known SEND (see Table 9.1).

**Table 9.1: Composition of participants by Sex at Angel and Saints Primary School**

School	Children’s Sex				Total
	Male		Female		
	No.	%	No.	%	
Angel Primary School	11	58	08	42	19
Saints Primary School	11	58	08	42	19
Total	22	58	16	42	38

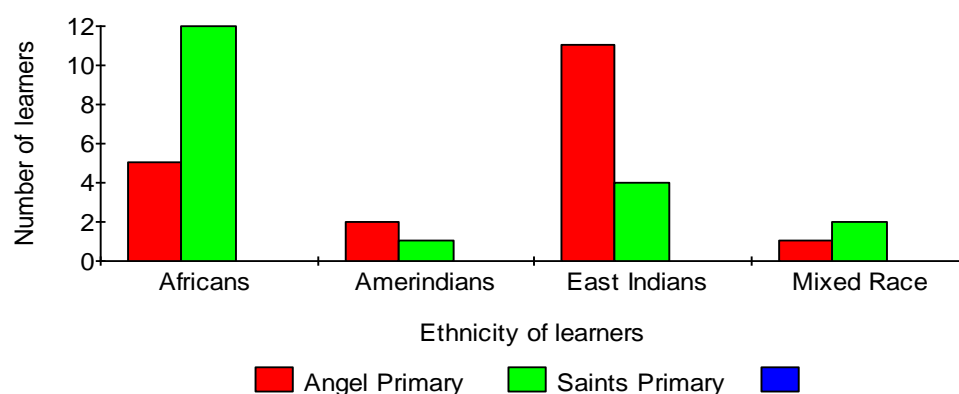
The literature suggests that there is considerable gap in attendance, experiences and exclusion across disability status for boys and girls between 6 and 11 years (Hincapié, Duryea & Hincapié, 2019). In this study, male children with SEND were less likely to receive support than female children with SEND in both schools. This was not a bias on

the part of the teachers but part of the cultural discourse in Guyana on the socialisation of the genders which promotes the idea that female children with SEND require more support than males. This probably contributed to more male children with SEND having unpleasant experiences and socialisation in comparison to females. Additionally, more male children with SEND may have been prepared to share their experiences with me because I am a male.

**Table 9. 2: Composition of participants by ethnicity at Angel and Saints Primary Schools**

Ethnicity	School			
	Angel Primary School		Saints Primary School	
	No.	%	No.	%
Africans	05	26	12	63
Amerindians	02	11	01	05
East Indians	11	58	04	21
Mixed Race	01	05	02	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>

**Chart 9.1: Composition of participants by ethnicity at Angel and Saints Primary School**



The participant, children with SEND in this study also represented the balance of ethnicities in the two schools (see Table 9.2). This is important because Guyana is a very ethnically diverse country and so this ethnic balance in the sample allowed for the exploration of the experiences and socialisation of children from various ethnic standpoints and discourses. The dominant culture and ethnicity of each community were represented in the sample in order to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the children with SEND as they are also situated in, and influenced by, the community.

## 9.3 Who is responsible for the unpleasant experiences and socialisation?

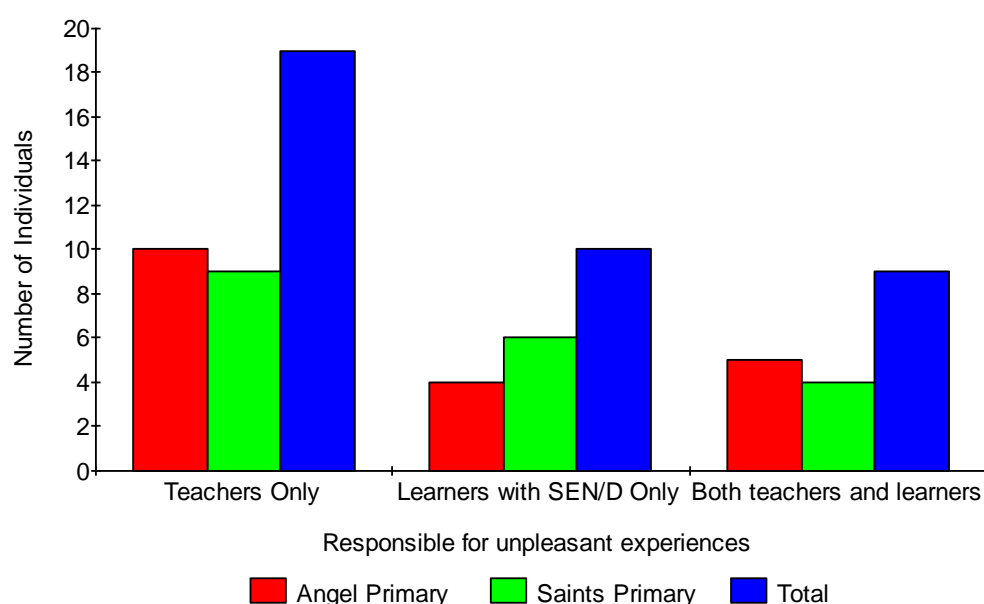
### 9.3.1 Children's Perspectives

All children had unpleasant experiences at some point at both of the schools and they were not given the support needed within the learning environment. This made experiences extremely challenging and increased the barriers to learning and their participation in activities in the classroom and around the school.

**Table 9.3: Children with SEND's views on responsibility for the unpleasant experiences they experienced in mainstream primary schools**

School	Responsible for unpleasant experiences in mainstream schools					
	Teachers Only		Children without SEND Only		Both teacher and children without SEND	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Angel Primary School	10	53	04	21	05	26
Saints Primary School	09	47	06	32	04	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>24</b>

**Chart 9.2: Children with SEND's views on responsibility for the unpleasant experiences they experienced in mainstream primary schools**



Children with SEND felt that various individuals and groups within the schools contributed to their unpleasant experiences. Just over half of children with SEND at Angel Primary felt that the teachers spawned their uncomfortable experiences despite the teachers being caught in a challenging dilemma of being unsupported while facing overwhelming expectations. Similarly, just under half of children with SEND at Saints Primary School also held this belief without realising that the discourses on SEND and culture in Guyana also have power over their teachers' conceptions and practices. These power influences were more significant in classes which take national assessments. In these classes, teachers showed direct preferences for children who were perceived as having the ability to excel at standardised assessments and would require less individualised support.

Less than quarter of children with SEND at both schools blamed their peers without SEND for their unpleasant experiences, marginalisation, victimisation, isolation, bullying and depersonalisation experienced in mainstream schools (see Table 9.3). The children without SEND were also caught in the discourse and unsure how to act in overwhelming situations. The children with SEND gave several reasons for placing the responsibility on their peers without SEND for their unpleasant experiences. First, they indicated that the children without SEND felt that they had autonomous power in the schools and children with SEND disrupted their autonomy. The children without SEND thought they had to exert their power and rights forcefully to let the children with SEND know that their presence was unwanted as in the cases of '*resistances and outbursts*', as exemplified by Thomas' public 'lashing out' at children with SEND for what he described as '*always messing things up*' (chapter seven).

Just over quarter of children with SEND at Angel Primary and just under quarter at Saints Primary blamed both children without SEND and the teachers for the unproductive experiences. Children with SEND indicated that the teachers' negative depersonalising attitudes towards children with SEND fuelled the perceptions of the children without SEND that children with SEND are inferior. The perception of inferiority concerning children with SEND was not entirely the responsibility of the teachers. They were also caught in the power of the dominant discourse which states that children with SEND are inferior, difficult to teach and unsuitable for mainstream schools.

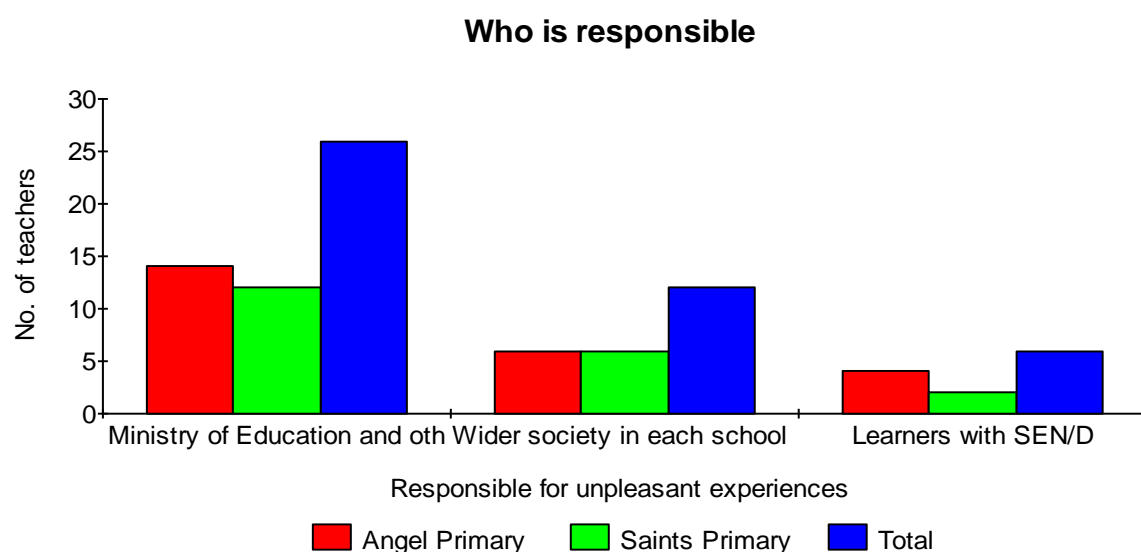
### 9.3.2 Teachers' Perspectives

There were significant differences in children and teachers' perspectives on who need to be held responsible for unpleasant experiences of children with SEND placed in the mainstream schools.

**Table 9.4: Teachers' perceptions of who is responsible for children's unpleasant experiences in mainstream primary schools**

School	Responsible for unpleasant experiences in mainstream schools					
	Ministry of Education moreover, other stakeholders		Wider society in each school communities		Children with SEND	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Angel Primary School	14	58	06	25	04	17
Saints Primary School	12	60	06	30	02	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>14</b>

**Chart 9.3: Teachers' perceptions of who is responsible for children's unpleasant experiences in mainstream primary schools**



Fifty-eight (58) per cent of teachers at Angel Primary and sixty (60) per cent of teachers at Saints Primary held the Ministry of Education, the government, society and other stakeholders responsible for the negative experiences of children with SEND (see Table 9.4). The Ministry of Education and its various sections like the CPCE, the SEND Unit, the Curriculum Unit and the NCERD have been blamed by teachers for not mobilising

and deploying adequate training in SEND during the initial teacher training; nor for having provided any continuous support and CPD for the teachers. Teachers were not supported by the education officers. Instead, they were judged on how they handled the situations which overwhelmed them and being constantly judged negatively caused more anxiety in teachers at schools. The education officers acted only as agents of the standardised gaze on teachers.

The teachers also attributed the limited resources provided to the schools as being the reason for children with SEND having to endure experiences unsuitable for their diverse needs. All schools in the administrative region where this study was conducted are given a standardised resource allowance to provide instructional and learning materials. The schools in the region are given these resources proportional to the size of the student population rather than taking into account the needs and diversity of the children in their schools. Resources need to be allocated based on children's needs in addition to the size of the student population. This would allow teachers to have access to more resources to properly support the children, thus, reducing the negative experiences for children with SEND. Teachers further indicated that besides being deficient, the resources provided were often unsuitable as instructional materials catering for the needs of the general population of children.

Another reason given by teachers for blaming the Ministry of Education and other senior stakeholders in education was the micromanaging of teachers in schools. Micromanagement commonly refers to the control of an enterprise in every way, down to the smallest detail, with the effect of obstructing progress (White, 2010). As most of the teachers time was used up trying to meet the requirements and demands of the standardised expectations, such as the completion of records etc.

Further, twenty-five (25) per cent of teachers at Angel Primary and thirty (30) per cent at Saints Primary blamed the communities in which both of the schools are located for the negative discourses on SEND, which dominate the communities' cultures and beliefs (see Table 9.4). The rural societies and communities, in which both schools are located, still hold some very primitive beliefs, including labelling impairments as omens, family curse or spiritual afflictions. These beliefs were manifested in the discourses and discursive practices in the schools. The discourses fuelled by primitive beliefs are almost always link to something scriptural from the religious books (Bible

mostly) and seem to be the source of the power use to marginalise and exclude children with SEND. The effects of the exclusion are also justified by the religious belief that is the will of God.

In addition, parents who were key members of the community also held critical positions within the schools' Parent Teachers Association (PTA), alumni, old students association and governors and helped to shape the school practices and cultural ethos. This included propagating negative discourses about SEND while in the schools, which were biased against children with SEND. The biases against children with SEND were seen, for example, in the resource donations given to the school from society. At Saints Primary, several book donations were received but there was no consideration for visually impaired children. These books came from the overseas based alumni who are aware of the presence of visually impaired children at Saints Primary. There were also several donations of computers to Angel Primary but these had no audio assistive technology or captioning software for children with auditory impairments. At the national and cultural observances like Emancipation Day, Indian Arrival Day, talks were given without either a sign language interpreter or visual support for the children with SEND who needed it. It was compulsory that the children attend the national and cultural observances and while the necessary technology was present in society, the support was not given to the schools. These were some of the significant reasons that caused the teachers to hold society responsible for the unpleasant experiences of children with SEND.

A few teachers related that they had observed some parents insulting each other about their children's underachievement because of impairments. The teachers also indicated that holding the celebrations of talent in society without including children with impairments is a direct form of social exclusion for children with SEND. This type of exclusion was more depersonalising when the events were held at school premises since schools are expected to be practising inclusion.

A minority of teachers, seventeen (17) per cent of teachers at Angel Primary and ten (10) per cent of teachers at Saints Primary, held the children with SEND responsible for their unpleasant experiences at mainstream schools (see Table 9.4). The teachers reported that in many cases, because of experiences in society and at home, the children with SEND became more vulnerable in schools. In their view, this was because the

children, through their interactions in the mainstream schools, exposed their weaknesses, which made them common targets for bullying, teasing and taunting (see chapter six and seven). The teachers stated that because the government initiated the placement, the children with SEND had more power than they realised. They had government power as support and the children with SEND could have created their own sphere of socialisation, for which the children without SEND acceptance was dependent upon their approval. I was expecting some teachers to acknowledge that they are partly responsible for the children experiences. Moreso, I was expecting Ramesh's teacher or Ravi's teacher or even Amera's to take some responsibility for the experiences of the children which were a direct outcome of the teachers' actions. Discussed in chapter five, six and seven some teachers are partly responsible for the experiences of the children with SEND.

I argue that it does not really matter who was responsible for the unpleasant experiences and socialisation of the children with SEND. The data I gathered indicated that the children with SEND have unpleasant experiences in the form of neglect, denied individualised support, bullying, marginalisation, biased treatment, depersonalisation, social isolation and exclusion. The voices of the children with SEND and their teachers in the schools suggest that a variety of actors are responsible for their experiences due to being embedded in the culture and discourse on SEND, which made the children with SEND vulnerable.

## **9.4 The spread of the marginalisation**

All children need opportunities that cater for their diversity which is not a one size fits all approach in education. The whole is not the mere institution of learning but rather the whole is each child in that institution seeking experiences, socialisation and opportunities to develop meaningfully, free of fear, victimisation, marginalisation, depersonalisation and prejudice. Until every child has the support, experiences, socialisation and opportunities s/he needs to succeed despite race, class, background, wealth, political association, culture or any factor which makes that child unique, it will be difficult to identify Saints and Angel primary schools as truly inclusive.

While the government, through the Ministry of Education insists that children with SEND participate in activities, events and experiences organised by the school or the



community, the Children with SEND in the two schools are doubtful about participation. Insisting that children with SEND participate in events, activities and experiences without reasonable adjustments being made is a form of victimisation, marginalisation and it is prejudicial. When children with SEND successfully conquer barriers obstructing their participation in activities and events such as school sports, debates, quizzes and science fairs, their achievements are seldom celebrated in a similar way to the children without SEND. Success achieved by children with SEND is often attributed to the additional support received, but which was paradoxically not forthcoming from the school. This indicated that without that support, success would have not been achieved. Nonetheless, support is what all children need to be successful. Such attributions were seldom heard if the support was given to a child without SEND, which is a normalised occurrence in both schools, especially for children preparing to take the National Grade Six Assessment.

The data suggest that the *one size fits all approach* was not only applied to learning experiences in classrooms but was also utilised in extra and co-curricular activities, sports, community events, and the resources given to all children. Neither reasonable adjustments nor modifications were made for children with SEND and other diversities. This appeared to be the standard operating procedure. These exclusion types of standardised approach, practices and operations made school experiences frustrating and unpleasant for children with SEND.

Children are highly anxious about going to school. Some children with SEN/D experience night terrors, extreme reactions of fear when it was time to go to school. Forty percent of children with Autism experience meltdowns, vomiting, migraine, collapsing, self-harm and other health issues (Epstein, Brown & O'Flynn, 2019, p. 2). According to Epstein, Brown and O'Flynn, parents in their study reported that their children were bullied and it is impossible to force their fearful and panicky children into school. Over sixty percent of the parents are single parents and lack basic resources needed to support their children.

A BBC report (Monday November 27 2017) featured a story on education in the United Kingdom. It was reported that more parents of children with SEND were opting to home school their children because of the stress, frustration, and unsuitable experiences their children were subjected to and, which to them only resulted in their children

developing anxieties and aggressive outbursts of anger tantrums. One eight-year-old with Autism, Katie, had an individualised education plan and stated that she wanted to learn, but the teachers in the mainstream schools in the United Kingdom did not teach her how to learn. The frustrated child also indicated that the social stigmatisation she experienced in schools on a typical day was so exhausting and emotionally burdensome, that she was reluctant to return to school the next day.

The BBC report further stated that Katie's mother indicated that it was painful to watch the frustrating experiences her autistic daughter endured in mainstream schools. She tried three mainstream schools before deciding on home-schooling for Katie. Many parents in the area I studied indicated that they had similar experiences seeing the frustration from their children's experiences. The children in Epstein, Brown and O'Flynn's study shared similar experiences. Unfortunately, most of the parents cannot afford to home school their children either because of limited resources, or because they are not educated enough for the task.

Many of The BBC report indicated that a significant per cent of children with disabilities in England were being home-schooled. Parents of children with SEND were doing this to ensure their children received a quality education without suffering stigmatisation and frustration, because the experiences in schools were not modified or individualised or contextualised to meet children's diverse needs. Although this home-schooling approach may be useful in England as an alternative route for educating children with SEND, Katie indicated that she missed the socialisation experiences with her friends, something which home-schooling cannot provide.

Parents in Guyana do not have the resources, networks or social support to home school their children with SEND. According to CIA World Fact Book, 2018, Guyana has 87.5 per cent adult literacy level<sup>7</sup>, this means that 87.5 per cent of adults can read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life. Very low literacy levels of parents affect children who are home schooled and take the national assessment at Grade Two, Four and Six. This is because, for example, the National Grade Two Assessment requires the

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<sup>7</sup>Guyana's adult (15+) literacy rate (%). The total is the percentage of the population age 15 and above who can, with understanding, read and writes a short, simple statement on their everyday life. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy', the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations. This indicator is calculated by dividing the number of literate people aged 15 years and over by the corresponding age group population and multiplying the result by 100.

child to have more than a basic understanding to read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life.

For children who were removed from special school or mainstream school, this often results in the end of their education in Guyana. Children with SEND who were kept at home were not home-schooled but, instead, they just stayed at home away from the frustration, depersonalisation, discrimination and marginalisation which came with mainstream schooling. However, being at home means being denied any opportunity of receiving an education. The fear of being denied the opportunity of receiving an education was the one of the reasons many children with SEND endured the negative experiences at Saints and Angel Primary Schools.

## **9.5 Summary**

### ***9.5.1 Experiences of primary children with SEND in Guyana***

I observed and interviewed thirty-eight children (thirty-six with SEND and two without SEND) within the two mainstream primary schools in rural postcolonial Guyana. Most of the experiences that children with SEND faced were negative because of the social barriers that were created in the schools and the negative discourses within Guyanese society. The mainstream schools were organised in ways which made them unsuitable for children with SEND. The mainstream schools could not accommodate the diversities of children. The schools' ethos emphasised excellence at national assessments at all costs and children with SEND were seen as liabilities to the schools.

The teachers were focused on the children with SEND's inabilities, impairments rather than on the social barriers to learning in the schools. There were barriers in both the physical and social environment of both schools (see chapter one and five through eight). The discourses in mainstream education were dominated by the individual deficit model of disability and created a negative collective consciousness about impairments which generated a negative environment in schools, making the experiences of children with SEND unpleasant and in most cases, meaningless. Furthermore, many of these barriers had their antecedents in a national history and legacy of segregation.

The competing social model of disability discourse views children with SEND as opportunities for school enhancement, but this was rarely seen in the two schools studied. The impairments and diversities were instead seen as challenges and burdens, which impacted negatively on school performances. Mainstream school staff needs to visualise the placement of children with SEND as a means to engage new ideas and reshape the curriculum and experiences for all children. It could be seen as a solution to some of the problems faced by the general children population (Lewis & Norwich, 2005; Yan & Deng, 2018). Unfortunately, including children with SEND in mainstream schools was seen as a hindrance to the standardised curriculum practices and experiences (chapter seven).

The teachers' attitudes and approaches also caused some barriers to learning in schools, yet, the children with SEND were blamed. While teachers' attitudes and conceptions affected the experiences of children with SEND, it would be unfair to place the blame on teachers solely when they were also placed in an uncomfortable situation along with the children with SEND. Teachers' fear of failure and reduced autonomy in the classroom through the standardised gaze also contributed to the negative experiences of children. Strict hierarchically controlled classroom practices and decision-making methods resulted in missed opportunities for all children. Besides being hierarchical, some decisions in mainstream education are political and these political choices are sometimes influenced by race and culture.

Inclusion is not just about including children with SEND in mainstream schools. Inclusion requires collaboration and support but the teachers neither gave support to children with SEND nor were they themselves supported. The effects of the lack of support were negative experiences for both teachers and children. These experiences negatively affect the victims by subjecting them to regular depersonalising ordeals. The teachers and children without SEND did not want the inclusion of children with impairments in the schools and the schools did not have the expertise to deal with these children. This is not uncommon in the global South, where, according to Kamenopoulou (2018), there are schools that include children with disabilities, but that do not have necessary support.

There were no systems in place to manage the entry and transition of children with SEND who were included in the two schools. This made the children with SEND more

vulnerable and disadvantaged. This resulted in the creation of a tiered socialisation structure, where children with SEND were placed on the lowest level from the onset of their placement (see chapter six). There were common denominators in the experiences of children with SEND, these included: social isolation, marginalisation, victimisation, discrimination, bullying, neglect and denied experiences.

Children with SEND were forced into mainstream school life without any modifications or reasonable adjustments to mainstream schools, which made it very difficult for them to have meaningful experiences and effective socialisation. Even children with mild learning disabilities suffered these disadvantages. The unsupported placement of children with SEND combined with a lack of partnerships between the teacher training college, mainstream schools, communities and other stakeholders contributed to some of the negative experiences of the children. Overall, there was an ad hoc approach to inclusion in the two schools. Mainstream teachers made decisions on whether to implement inclusive education based on what they know about inclusive education and how effective they thought it to be (Kamenopoulou, 2018; Yan & Deng, 2018). The limitations of mainstream teachers' knowledge on inclusive education led to their conceptions and the position they took (Trigwell & Prosser, 1996; Orsolya, Päivi & Terhi, 2019) which in Guyana's case led to the meaningless experiences endured by children with SEND.

### ***9.5.2 Children with SEND's feelings about their experiences***

Overall, children with SEND felt that they were unwanted in the two schools. They felt that teachers were in most cases unsupportive, and least concerned about the welfare of children whom they perceived as being unable to perform well at national assessments. They felt that being unsupported in their placement in mainstream schools confirmed their perceived lesser value in Guyanese society. As a result, these children often felt abandoned, neglected, ignored and cast aside. Children with SEND placed in the two schools felt that mainstreaming neither enhanced their learning experiences and socialisation nor contributed to them achieving significantly. One child indicated that he had learnt that even in school, it was the survival of the fittest. With his impairment, he learnt to conquer or be conquered; trample or be trampled and many children with SEND felt trampled. Some children with SEND, who were also victims of abuse and

domestic violence, expressed feelings of despondence and entertained suicidal thoughts. The tiered layers of socialisation (chapter six) often made children feel like illegal immigrants in the schools. Some children with SEND whose parents were influential religious/cultural leaders, also felt betrayed by their religion and culture. While society celebrated the parents, it shunned the children's impairments as though they were indeed omens, sins and family curses. These children often felt like evil resided within them as propagated by society. As a result, they tended to accept society's beliefs and felt that their negative experiences were deserved.

Other children felt that mainstream school placement was just another hurdle and unpleasant experience they had to endure. The statement of one child; '*I cannot do this anymore*', indicates how much of a psychological torture mainstream school placement was for him. Children with SEND felt that there were colliding worlds in schools. There was the world of children without SEND, the teachers' world and the lesser and marginalised world of children with SEND. The differences and superiority of power in the world of mainstream teachers and children without SEND oppressed the world of children with SEND and through this oppressive power, they regulated experiences and socialisation for children with SEND. Children with SEND felt this unfair treatment was purposefully done to remind them of their perceived deficits, inabilities and the inequalities in schools and the broader society.

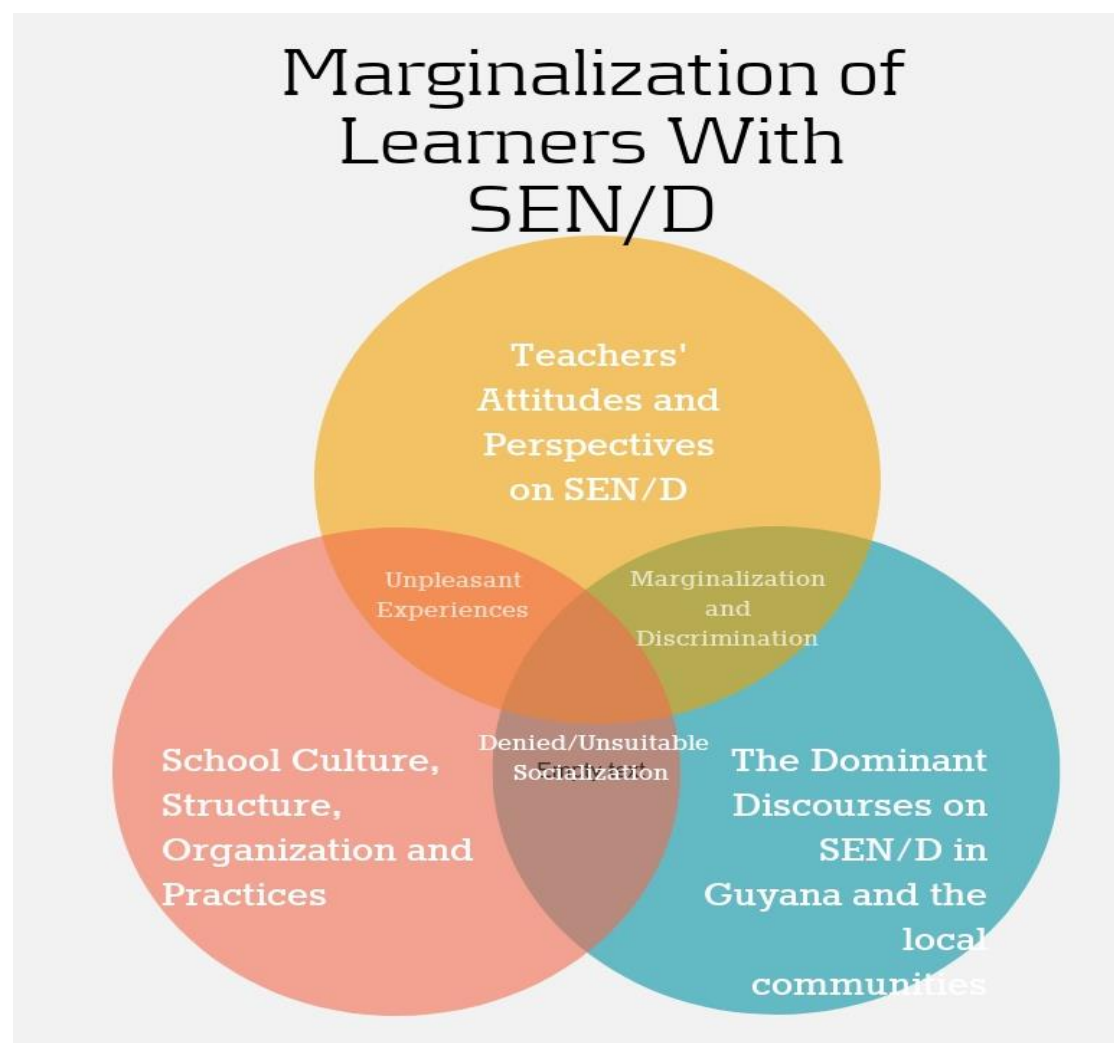
In cases when children with SEND felt accepted, they felt more like possessions than equals in schools. This form of acceptance was neither beneficial nor did it help them achieve in school. These children indicated that they felt divided from their peers without SEND and this division made them feel betrayed. The children with SEND also felt that their experiences at mainstream schools were made unbearably unpleasant because efforts and resources were not in place to make any reasonable adjustments or modifications to accommodate them. They felt unwanted and forced to be in mainstream schools under undue emotional stress.

One of the critical features of the theoretical framework stated that mainstream teachers could learn from how the reduction of barriers for some children could benefit all children. The children with SEND felt that the teachers did the opposite and that the barriers in school were increased for them because they interrupted the standardised

practices in the learning processes. The children with SEND indicated that this hurt, because all they wanted was the opportunity to learn and socialise like any other child.

## 9.6 Revolving factors contributing to the marginalisation of children with SEND

**Venn Diagram 9.4: Marginalisation of children with SEND**



The marginalisation of children with SEND in and around mainstream schools in Guyana is prevalent because of inadequate or unsuitable resources, the colliding discourses and perceptions on SEND and because of other revolving factors. These revolving factors are embedded in the dominant discourse on SEND and are empowered by traditions, cultures, attitudes and the dominant individual deficit model

of disability, which is widely accepted in Guyana. The interconnectedness of the revolving factors is illustrated in the chart above.

Teachers' attitudes and conceptions of SEND, school culture and structure, as well as the discourses on SEND have guided society's understanding of SEND. In 2018 and again in 2019, I went to Guyana's Rupununi Savannah for a meeting with the key stakeholders in the mainstream education hierarchy. There were vast disparities among teachers and critical education stakeholders on the concept of SEND (see Table 9.5 below). The dominance of the individual deficits model of disability continues to be a revolving factor which creates barriers to the experiences and socialisation of children with SEND. The same disparities on the concept were revealed by the teachers in Guyana two years earlier.

**Table 9.5: Disparities among policymakers and critical education stakeholders' understandings of the concept SEND in Guyana**

Statements reflecting education stakeholders' understanding of the concept SEND in Guyana
A programme which caters for children with various needs and provides material and instruction to foster the child with SEND development
Situations where students who may not be capable of grasping knowledge as fast as others are grouped and given special attention and extra classes to bring about equal understanding as others.
Children who have a difficulty with learning at an average rate and need more individual attention.
Students who are considered as having learning disabilities being taught in different ways than the other students.
Students with physical deficiencies.
Students who have a disability or a problem understanding like regular students.
Children with some form of disability that requires extra attention from a professional educator.

**Source:** *School culture and teachers' perspectives on Special Education Needs and disabilities within Guyana's mainstream elementary school system.*

All the statements indicate that there is a deficit in the child, but none of the statements acknowledged that there may be a deficit in the social and physical environment. This is propagated and propelled by the discourses that children with SEND are lesser or somehow incapable because of the perceived individual limitations created by impairment. There are no statements which include the idea compensation, adjustment or modification in curriculum organisation and implementation or organisation and structure of the learning environment.



There is the perception in the mainstream education arena that children with SEND cannot be empowered. Mainstream educators, whether consciously or unconsciously feel they are empowered to keep children with SEND within their perceived limitations. This imbalance of power in social relations maintains the dominant discourse and culture (Foucault, 1980; Selchow, 2017). This form of marginalising power acting upon children with SEND connects mainstream school and society through the central tenets of the individual deficit model of disability.

These interconnected tenets, and associated embedded discourses, became the sustaining fuel for the revolving factors, which contributed to the marginalisation of children with SEND in the two schools. Such revolving factors in education need to be examined and improved through educational metamorphosis to make the experiences and socialisation of all children meaningful. However, the revolving factors in mainstream education in Guyana, mainly teachers' conceptions, traditional cultures and dominant individual deficit model discourses are not evolving to cater to children's individual needs. The marginalisation felt by children with SEND in the previous generation, such as Aquennie, (see chapter one and five) is still being experienced by the present generation of children.

## **Future Research**

I provided an understanding of the experiences of children with SEND placed in mainstream primary schools in Guyana through their revealed voices in the discourses. I also indicated the path for future research in SEND in Guyana. The following areas could be explored in future research using this study as a platform.

- The experiences of children with SEND in the community and workplace, after they have completed mainstream education in developing multicultural, multiracial and postcolonial Guyana.
- The isolation experiences of children with SEND who have been taken out of school and are permanently kept at home, in developing multicultural, multiracial and postcolonial Guyana.

- The evolution of mainstream teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards teaching children with SEND in developing multicultural, multiracial and postcolonial Guyana.
- The experiences of native Amerindian children with SEND in the forested highland regions who have never had the opportunity to attend any form of school.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A- Analysis of self monitoring at Saints Primary School

Teacher ID Code	Average Score at each Self Monitoring (S-Session, there were 12 sessions. Teachers were asked to self assess fortnightly)												Overall Average
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	
SPS 001	30	34	40	44	46	46	50	51	56	60	45	62	47.0
SPS 002	28	30	32	36	40	40	40	45	46	50	52	58	41.4
SPS 003	25	34	34	35	36	42	40	44	45	46	50	56	40.6
SPS 004	34	35	36	38	38	40	44	44	48	50	56	60	43.6
SPS 005	34	36	38	38	45	45	46	58	50	54	56	58	46.5
SPS 006	33	36	36	40	42	44	45	46	50	56	58	62	45.7
SPS 007	32	50	54	56	50	50	54	56	58	60	60	66	46.8
SPS 008	30	44	50	50	57	58	56	57	59	60	62	65	54.0
SPS 009	28	45	50	56	58	56	60	60	62	64	64	65	55.7
SPS 010	45	46	44	48	50	48	60	58	60	62	63	66	54.2

<b>SPS 011</b>	42	56	50	48	48	50	60	56	58	60	64	62	<b>54.9</b>
<b>SPS 012</b>	35	50	52	50	54	52	58	56	58	60	62	64	<b>54.3</b>
<b>SPS 013</b>	36	40	46	48	50	54	58	58	60	62	66	65	<b>53.6</b>
<b>SPS 014</b>	32	45	46	44	46	50	56	54	58	56	60	64	<b>50.9</b>
<b>SPS 015</b>	36	45	44	46	48	50	53	56	58	56	58	45	<b>50.4</b>
<b>SPS 016</b>	32	38	40	45	50	54	56	57	56	58	62	60	<b>46.3</b>
<b>SPS 017</b>	31	35	36	40	45	50	52	54	55	56	58	58	<b>47.5</b>
<b>SPS 018</b>	38	39	40	42	43	48	50	50	56	58	56	58	<b>48.2</b>
<b>SPS 019</b>	37	40	40	42	45	48	50	56	58	58	60	62	<b>49.7</b>
<b>SPS 020</b>	34	46	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	60	62	66	<b>51.5</b>
<b>School Average</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>50</b>

### Appendix B - Analysis of self monitoring at Angel Primary School

Teacher ID Code	Average Score at each Self Monitoring (S-Session, there were 12 sessions. Teachers were asked to self assess fortnightly)												Overall Average Per Teacher
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	
<b>APS 001</b>	54	45	40	56	58	55	60	62	64	66	58	60	<b>56.5</b>
<b>APS 002</b>	50	52	56	58	56	57	58	60	62	63	64	65	<b>58.4</b>
<b>APS 003</b>	40	42	44	40	44	45	46	48	48	50	56	58	<b>46.8</b>
<b>APS 004</b>	36	35	38	40	44	45	45	47	48	50	56	60	<b>45.3</b>
<b>APS 005</b>	30	34	40	42	44	45	47	48	49	40	50	58	<b>43.9</b>
<b>APS 006</b>	45	45	45	46	45	47	48	46	45	46	45	48	<b>45.9</b>
<b>APS 007</b>	40	38	50	45	56	56	57	58	54	45	48	58	<b>50.4</b>
<b>APS 008</b>	45	46	48	48	50	52	53	54	56	58	60	66	<b>53.0</b>
<b>APS 009</b>	43	45	44	46	58	48	56	57	58	60	64	65	<b>53.7</b>
<b>APS 010</b>	30	35	36	38	40	48	50	52	46	50	55	60	<b>45.0</b>
<b>APS 011</b>	20	45	45	46	48	50	54	56	53	54	60	65	<b>49.7</b>
<b>APS 012</b>	34	36	45	56	46	58	58	56	50	60	63	65	<b>52.3</b>
<b>APS 013</b>	36	38	40	43	42	45	46	48	50	56	60	66	<b>47.5</b>

<b>APS 014</b>	40	42	44	46	46	48	46	56	58	56	56	60	<b>49.8</b>
<b>APS 015</b>	56	58	58	60	68	67	65	56	66	68	65	68	<b>62.9</b>
<b>APS 016</b>	34	36	40	50	56	58	58	60	64	65	65	69	<b>54.6</b>
<b>APS 017</b>	24	34	36	45	56	50	54	56	58	60	66	68	<b>50.6</b>
<b>APS 018</b>	35	35	43	45	44	45	56	56	58	60	66	68	<b>50.9</b>
<b>APS 019</b>	36	46	48	50	52	55	58	56	60	58	58	60	<b>53.1</b>
<b>APS 020</b>	45	48	50	50	56	58	59	60	62	58	56	62	<b>55.3</b>
<b>APS 021</b>	46	48	45	48	50	52	54	56	60	62	58	60	<b>53.3</b>
<b>APS 022</b>	47	50	48	50	56	58	60	62	64	65	66	68	<b>57.8</b>
<b>APS 023</b>	20	45	46	52	54	56	56	58	58	59	60	64	<b>52.3</b>
<b>APS 024</b>	26	46	48	54	56	56	68	60	62	64	56	69	<b>55.4</b>
<b>School Average</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>52</b>

### Appendix C: The composition of teachers at Saints Primary School

Ethnicity	Area of Residency of School Community		Graduates		Gender		Level		Total amount of teachers
	Within	Outside	UG	CPCE	M	F	Senior	Junior	
<b>African</b>	10	08	03	15	01	17	06	10	18
<b>East Indians</b>	00	02	00	02	01	01	01	03	02
<b>Amerindians</b>	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>20</b>

### Appendix D: The composition of teachers at Angel Primary School

Ethnicity	Area of Residency of School Community		Graduates		Gender		Grade		Total amount of teachers
	Within	Outside	UG	CPCE	M	F	Senior	Junior	
<b>African</b>	00	08	04	04	02	06	02	06	<b>08</b>
<b>East Indians</b>	10	04	04	10	02	12	04	10	<b>14</b>
<b>Amerindians</b>	02	00	00	02	00	02	00	02	<b>02</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>24</b>

## Appendix E: The Inclusive Checker for Southern mainstream primary classrooms

### Key:

**5- Always      4- Often      3- Satisfactory   2- Sometimes   1- Seldom      0- Never**

The maximum possible score is 75 points. Teachers need to achieve a minimum total of 45 in order for their practices and classrooms are considered meeting basic inclusiveness. However, it is intended to be a recorded maintained by the individual teacher and only made public at the teacher's request or consent.

#	Inclusive Checks Criteria/Behaviour	Degree of Behaviour Presence						Notable Comments
		5	4	3	2	1	0	
1	All children are warmly greeted at the start of each school day and are treated with love, respect and appreciation of their individual uniqueness							
2	Children are never classified and/or differentiated on the basis of need, background, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, culture and any criteria which could be deem discriminatory or non-inclusive.							
3	Instructions are always tailored to suit each child level of communication, readiness and interest while maintaining the basic benchmarks for the grade level							
4	Differences in children are celebrated and are used as resources to enhance learning experiences. They are never highlighted as deficiencies.							
5	Learning experiences are flexible and easily modified to suit all children' differences.							
6	Instructional materials and resources are diversified and cater for all. Some instructional materials are culturally related to children.							
7	Opportunities are provided for all children to share in classroom activities. They are guided and provided with support to aid effective socialisation							
8	Children are praised regularly and given immediate constructive criticism and feedback on the issue or learning and never the child directly.							
9	Classrooms are organised in such a way that all children have easy access to all shared resources especially children with SEND							
10	Teachers' attitude is positive towards children, their							

	socialisation and their learning.								
11	Children are guided to support each other and to express themselves without fear of prejudice, mockery or segregation.								
12	Children are helped and/or support and/or barriers to learning and social challenges on to achieving the basic targets each day								
13	Children are always given the opportunity towards enhancing their experiences at school and teachers respect and take their contributions into consideration.								
14	Reasonable adjustments and/or modifications are made by teachers as they are necessary or needed by children.								
15	Share high yet reasonable expectations for all children creating parallel alternatives of the same shared expectations for children with SEND.								
	<b>TOTAL</b>								

**A+ - Outstanding 70-75**

**B - Good 55- 59**

**D - Low inclusiveness 44 and below**

Date Completed: .....

Class: .....

Grade achieved: .....

**A - Excellent 65-69**

**C+ - Fair 50- 54**

**B+ - Very Good 60-64**

**C - Satisfactory 45 -54**

Name of teacher: .....

Signature of teacher: .....

## Appendix F: Permission Request from Guyana's Education Authority

### UNIVERSITY of GUYANA

#### Faculty of Education & Humanities

Turkeyen Campus, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown,

P.O. Box 101110, Guyana, South America

Website: uog.edu.gy Tel: + (592) 222-7015/222-4930 Ext: 2269

#### Department of Foundation and Education Management

Tel: (592) 222-4924

18-12-2017

The Chief Education Officer

'Thru' The Deputy Chief Education Officer (ag)

Ministry of Education

Brickdam,

Georgetown,

Guyana.

Dear Sir:

### **RE: Permission to conduct PhD research in Region No. 5**

I am Lidon Lashley, Guyana's Commonwealth PhD Scholar 2017/2020. My scholarship number is GYCS 2017-178. I am also a full time lecturer at the University of Guyana and part time at the Cyril Potter College of Education in the areas of Special and Inclusive Education, Curriculum Studies and Educational Research. I have also been a qualified teacher with the Ministry of Education for more than a decade.

The conditions of the Guyana Scholarship Division and Commonwealth Scholarship Committee require me to conduct research in the area of Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities in Guyana. The title of my research is '**The metamorphosis of a developing Southern country's education system for children with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)**'. This research will be guided by the following research objectives:

- **RO1:** To assess experiences of children with SEND who are placed in mainstream primary schools in Guyana and express how these children feel about their experiences
- **RO2:** To explore what reasonable adjustments and curriculum modifications are made by mainstream teachers to ensure children with SEND in mainstream primary schools in Guyana, receive meaningful experiences.
- **RO3:** To develop a southern inclusive framework to guide the placement of children with SEND in mainstream education with postcolonial Guyana.

For economical and other logistical reasons, Region No. 5 has been selected as the area in which to conduct this research. The proposed start in July, 2018 and I have interest in the following four schools:

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Belladrum Primary     | 3. Lichfield Primary or Seafield Primary |
| 2. Latchmansingh Primary | 4. Bath Settlement Primary.              |

The approaches which will be utilised are participant observations, interviews and focus groups. I will be a participant observer in the selected mainstream primary schools. In order to participate fully, I will be the floating teacher. As a floating teacher, I will not be assigned a class. I will support teachers in classes which require support. I will cover classes in absences of teachers, and attend to SEND challenges and other needed circumstances related to the experiences of children with SEND. This will be done over two terms (semesters). I will observe in class experiences, socialisation experiences in and around the school, as well as participation in co and extra curricular activities like school concert, movie day, culture day etc. In addition, I will volunteer to do lunch and play time supervision and home visits.

These schools will benefit directly from having a published special education and curriculum researcher to assist them writing their inclusive policies and framing practices to work with children with Special Education Needs.

I hereby seek your official consent to conduct the research as it is required by the Guyana Scholarship Division and Commonwealth Scholarship Committee. I assure you all standards of education practices in Guyana will be upheld.

My Director of Studies, the Guyana Scholarship Division and Commonwealth Scholarship Committee, and my HOD at the University of Guyana could be contacted for verification. My supervisor is Professor Debbie Epstein and she could be contacted

at Roehampton University, London via email [debbie.epstein@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:debbie.epstein@roehampton.ac.uk) or telephone +44 7957469922. My HOD Dr. Michelle Semple-McBean, could be contacted at the University of Guyana on telephone number +592 222 4924 or via email [michelle.mcbean@uog.edu.gy](mailto:michelle.mcbean@uog.edu.gy).

Yours sincerely,

Lidon Lashley

**Tr. Cert., B.Ed., Pg. Dip. Acc, Pg. Cert. Ed. *Mgmt.* M.Ed., M. A. SEN.**

**Lecturer, Department of Foundation & Education Management**

**Faculty of Education & Humanities**

**Commonwealth Scholar 2017/2020, Research Student**

Tel: + (592) 609189 / + 44 7496187260

[lidon\\_lashley@yahoo.com](mailto:lidon_lashley@yahoo.com)